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Between the Hammer and the Anvil: The Trade Unions and the 2011 Arab Uprisings in Morocco and Tunisia

by

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work. The thesis, and no portion of its, has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the divergent role of the trade unions in the 2011 uprisings of Morocco and Tunisia. In Morocco, most labour confederations supported constitutional reform that guaranteed the continuity of the incumbent regime. By contrast, in Tunisia, the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) called regional general strikes that contributed to the downfall of President Ben Ali. These outcomes appear paradoxical in light of institution-based studies of North African trade unions before 2011, in which the trade unions' mobilising potential was underestimated for "single-trade union" Tunisia and overstated for "union pluralist" Morocco.

This thesis argues that, although labour institutions significantly mediate social conflict (or significantly fail to do so), class struggle and class power transcend and transform labour institutions in ways that are missed by institution-based research. Such dynamics are innovatively interpreted through an expanded conception of the working class that goes beyond manual waged workers. In this way, this thesis sheds new light on the relations between the subjectivities that came to the fore in the 2011 uprisings, particularly precarious youths, and long-standing labour confederations. The thesis draws on original empirical material, which is interpreted through a historical sociology framework, which combines autonomist Marxism with elements of historical institutionalism to see working-class power and labour institutions as outcomes of previous class struggles.

The historical chapters of the thesis show how different systems of labour institutions and different levels of working-class power were built in the two countries since independence through divergent trajectories of class struggle. The chapters focusing on the 2011 uprisings show how such factors contributed to shaping the role of the trade unions in the protests. This thesis finds that relatively high levels of working-class power facilitated a more active role of the trade unions in protests for social change and contributed – among other factors – to a more extensive change in a democratic direction. Additionally, workers and trade unions were more likely to promote social change in an abrupt and insurrectional manner when they faced a relatively rigid system of labour institutions. By showing how historical rounds of social and particularly class conflict contributed to shaping the divergent roles of the trade unions in the 2011 uprisings of Morocco and Tunisia, this thesis fills a significant gap in the published literature and shows the merits of a historical, class-based, and struggle-centred approach to studying trade unions.

List of Abbreviations

AMDH = *Association Marocaine des Droits Humains* (Moroccan Human Rights Association)

ANDCM = *Association Nationale des Diplômés Chômeurs du Maroc* (National Association of the Unemployed Graduates of Morocco)

ATFD = *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (Tunisian Association of Democratic Women)

AwI = *Al Adl Wa Al Ihssane* (Justice and Spirituality, Moroccan Islamist organisation)

CDT = *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (Democratic Labour Confederation, Morocco)

CDT-SNP = *Confédération Démocratique du Travail – Syndicat National de la Poste* (Democratic Labour Confederation – National Mail Union)

CFT = *Commission des Femmes Travailleuses* (Working Women's Commission, Tunisia)

CGEM = *Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc* (General Confederation of Morocco's Enterprises)

CGT = *Confédération Générale du Travail* (General Labour Confederation, France)

CGTT = *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (General Confederation of the Tunisian Workers)

CNI = *Congrès National Ittihadi* (National Unionist Congress, Morocco)

CNPR = *Conseil National pour la Protection de la Révolution* (National Council for the Protection of the Revolution, Tunisia)

CNSS = *Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale* (National Social Security Fund, Morocco and Tunisia)

COS-ONE = *Comité d'Oeuvres Sociales – Office National d'Électricité* (Firm-Level Welfare – National Electricity Office, Morocco)

CPG = *Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa* (Gafsa Phosphates Company, Tunisia)

CPR = *Congrès pour la République* (Congress for the Republic, Tunisian political party)

EC = Executive Committee

EJC = Enterprise Joint Commission (Tunisia)

ESC = Economic and Social Council (Morocco and Tunisia)

ETUF = Egyptian Trade Union Federation

FCA = Frame Collective Agreement (Tunisia)

FdG = *Fédération de Gauche* (Left Federation, Moroccan leftist coalition)

FDT = *Fédération Démocratique du Travail* (Democratic Labour Federation, Morocco)

FDT-SNE = *Fédération Démocratique du Travail – Syndicat National de l'Enseignement* (Democratic Federation of Labour – National Teaching Union)

FP = *Front Populaire* (Popular Front, Tunisian leftist coalition)

HCP = *Haut-Commissariat au Plan* (Higher Planning Commission, Morocco)

ICFTU = International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

IGF = *Inspection Générale des Finances* (Inspectorate General of Finances, Morocco)

ILO = International Labour Organization

IMF = International Monetary Fund

INS = *Institut National de la Statistique* (National Statistics Institute, Tunisia)

JCC = Joint Consultative Commission (Tunisia)

LPR = *Ligue pour la Protection de la Révolution* (League for Protection of the Revolution, Tunisia)

LTDH = *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme* (Tunisian Human Rights League)

M20Fev = *Mouvement 20 Février* (20 February Movement, Morocco)

MENA = Middle East and North Africa

MGEN = *Mutuelle Générale de l'Éducation Nationale* (National Teaching General Insurance Fund, Morocco)

MTI = *Mouvement Tendance Islamique* (Islamic Movement Tendency, Tunisia)

NEC = National Executive Committee

OCP = *Office Chérifien des Phosphates* (Sherifian Office of Phosphates, Morocco)

ODT = *Organisation Démocratique du Travail* (Democratic Organisation of Labour, Morocco)

OFPPT = *Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail* (Office for Professional Training and Employment Promotion, Morocco)

ONA = *Omnium Nord-Africain* (North African Corporation, Moroccan investment holding)

ONE = *Office National d'Électricité* (National Electricity Office, Morocco)

PADS = *Parti de l'Avant-garde Démocratique et Socialiste* (Party of the Socialist Democratic Vanguard, Morocco)

PAM = *Parti Authenticité et Modernité* (Authenticity and Modernity Party, Morocco)

PCM = *Parti Communiste du Maroc* (Moroccan Communist Party)

PCOT = *Parti Communiste des Ouvriers de Tunisie* (Tunisian Workers' Communist Party)

PCT = *Parti Communiste Tunisien* (Tunisian Communist Party)

PDP = *Parti Démocrate Progressiste* (Progressive Democratic Party, Tunisia)

PJD = *Parti de la Justice et du Développement* (Justice and Development Party, Morocco)

PPS = *Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme* (Party of Progress and Socialism, Morocco)

PSD = *Parti Socialiste Destourien* (Socialist Destourian Party, Tunisia)

PSU = *Parti Socialiste Unifié* (Unified Socialist Party, Morocco)

PTT = Postal, Telegraph and Telephone

RCD = *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (Democratic Constitutional Rally, Tunisian political party)

RNI = *Rassemblement National des Indépendants* (National Rally of the Independents, Moroccan political party)

RSDM = *Rencontre Syndicale Démocratique Militante* (Democratic Militant Trade Union Meeting, Tunisia)

SAMIR = *Société Anonyme Marocaine de l'Industrie et du Raffinage* (Moroccan Public Limited Company of Industry and Refinery)

SG = Secretary General

SNCPA = *Société Nationale de Cellulose et de Papier Alfa* (National Company of Cellulose and Alfa Paper, Tunisia)

SNESup = *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (National Higher Education Union, Morocco)

SOE = State-Owned Enterprise

UC = *Union Constitutionnelle* (Constitutional Union, Moroccan political party)

UDC = *Union des Diplômés Chômeurs* (Union of the Unemployed Graduates, Tunisia)

UGET = *Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie* (General Union of Tunisia's Students)

UGSCM = *Union Générale des Syndicats Confédérés du Maroc* (General Union of the Confederated Syndicates of Morocco)

UGTM = *Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc* (General Union of the Moroccan Workers)

UGTT = *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (Tunisian General Labour Union)

UGTT-FGTM = *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail – Fédération Générale des Travailleurs des Mines* (Tunisian General Labour Union – General Federation of Mining Workers)

UGTT-SGEB = *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail – Syndicat Général de l'Enseignement de Base* (Tunisian General Labour Union – General Union of Primary Teaching)

UGTT-SGES = *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail – Syndicat Général de l'Enseignement Secondaire* (Tunisian General Labour Union – General Union of Secondary Teaching)

UMT = *Union Marocaine du Travail* (Moroccan Labour Union)

UMT-CD = *Union Marocaine du Travail – Courant Démocratique* (Moroccan Labour Union – Democratic Current)

UMT-FNE = *Union Marocaine du Travail – Fédération National de l'Enseignement* (Moroccan Labour Union – National Teaching Federation)

UMT-FNOFCL = *Union Marocaine du Travail – Fédération Nationale des Ouvriers et Fonctionnaires des Collectivités Locales* (Moroccan Labour Union – National Federation of the Workers and Clerks of the Local Administrations)

UMT-FNSA = *Union Marocaine du Travail – Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole* (Moroccan Labour Union – National Federation of the Agricultural Sector)

UMT-USF = *Union Marocaine du Travail – Union Syndicale des Fonctionnaires* (Moroccan Labour Union – Civil Servants Trade Union)

UMT-USIB = *Union Marocaine du Travail – Union Syndicale Inter-Bancaire* (Moroccan Labour Union – Inter-Bank Trade Union)

UNEM = *Union Nationale des Étudiants du Maroc* (National Union of Moroccan Students)

UNFP = *Union Nationale des Forces Populaires* (National Union of the Popular Forces, Morocco)

UNTM = *Union Nationale du Travail au Maroc* (National Labour Union of Morocco)

USFP = *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires* (Socialist Union of the Popular Forces, Morocco)

USTT = *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs de Tunisie* (Trade Union of Tunisia's Workers)

UTICA = *Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie du Commerce et de l'Artisanat* (Tunisian Union of Industry Trade and Handicrafts)

UTT = *Union Tunisienne du Travail* (Tunisian Labour Union)

UTT = *Union des Travailleurs de Tunisie* (Union of Tunisia's Workers)

Introduction: The Quest for Social Justice and Democracy

فماذا نقول وماذا نريد؟
نريد الحياة بلا ظالمين […]
عملنا الكثير صنعنا المحال
وكل الجهود وكل الثمار
تعود مكاسب للمترفين[1]
Awled El-Manajem – "Nasheed Esh'aab" (Hymn to the People)

بطبيعتو الدّورو في جيـبي ما خذاش لهف[…]
ما عادش تاكل لوغة ضرب .. بدني مخّي تخرّب
من ظالم نبيحو كلب .. أدخل لحومنا تي قْرّب
من ريحتك لعباد تتهرّب[2]
Hamzaoui Med Amine and Kafon – "Houmani" (Boy from the 'Hood)

A Life without Oppression

These lyrics symbolise historical changes and continuities in Maghribi working-class culture. In fact, the band Awled El-Manajem started its activities in the 1970s, while MCs Hamzaoui Med Amine and Kafon rose to fame in 2013. Both songs call for rebellion against injustice, but while Awled El-Manajem (i.e. the sons of the mines) stressed exploitation in the workplace, today's rappers emphasise dispossession in the community. By the end of the thesis, it will become clear that these artists' shift in focus is not casual but linked to the broader metamorphosis of the region's working class. It will also emerge how such transformations have had deep impacts on the ways in which the trade unions can fulfil their assigned mission of defending workers' interests against – in the words of both songs – "the oppressors".

This thesis, in fact, studies the political role of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions in the 2011 Arab uprisings by analysing their relations with the working class, on the one hand, and the capitalist state, on the other. What role did the trade unions

[1] "What do we say, what do we want?/ We want life without oppressors/ […] We worked a lot, we built the impossible/ And all the efforts, all the fruits/ All the profits went back to the rich…". Translated by Marwa Talhaoui and the author.
[2] "By their nature, pennies don't stay long in my pocket/ […] We don't understand anymore the language of violence, my body and brains are ruined/ When the oppressor comes the dogs bark, enter our neighbourhood come closer/ The people run away from your smell…". Translated by Marwa Talhaoui and the author.

play in Morocco and Tunisia during the 2011 Arab uprisings? How did they contribute to shaping the broader outcomes of the uprisings in the two countries? These are the core questions that guide the present research. Despite the vast literature analysing the 2011 Arab uprisings, relatively little attention has been paid to class analysis and to the trade unions' contributions to the successes and failures of such mobilisations in achieving social justice and democracy. Even less has been written on how to interpret the relations between the trade unions and the precarious youths that were at the forefront of the uprisings.

The 2011 Arab uprisings were a global watershed, and a deeper comprehension of their history is a contribution to a more effective understanding of our present and future. In spite of widespread orientalist assumptions about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), social justice and democracy were the central aspirations of the uprisings. However, the revolutionary demands that exploded in 2011, pointing in potentially progressive directions, have remained tragically unmet. As trade unions have historically been a major organisational vehicle in the quest for social justice and democracy, this thesis investigates under what conditions they can still contribute to social struggles towards these goals.

While "institution-based" approaches have seen the institutional framework as the most relevant element in the analysis of the political role of trade unionism, the argument advanced here is that, although labour institutions significantly mediate social conflict (or significantly fail to do so), class struggle and class power transcend and transform labour institutions in ways that are missed by institution-based research. Labour institutions should be understood as built through historical rounds of class struggle and grounded in a given balance of class power. The findings of this thesis show that the role of the trade unions in the 2011 uprisings was shaped primarily by the balance of class power and secondarily by the incumbent system of labour institutions. In turn, both of these were the outcomes of previous, contingent class struggles.

Trade unionism has a long history in Morocco and Tunisia, dating back from the time of the protectorate. In both countries, the labour movement made a significant contribution to the national liberation struggle and, once independence was achieved, it attempted to participate in the construction of a socially just and democratic society. However, formal national independence fell short of popular aspirations, and thus the unions found themselves time and again drawn into fierce struggles for socioeconomic

as well as civil rights.

Morocco and Tunisia are particularly fit for comparison because they are relatively similar cases, despite the fact that the former is a monarchy and the latter a republic. In fact, they are both Maghribi countries and share the legacies of the French protectorate and parallel paths of neoliberal structural adjustment. Both were recently affected by a wave of major social mobilisations in which the trade unions were involved. However, in Tunisia, the single labour confederation *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) called for regional general strikes in solidarity with the protests, contributing to Ben Ali's downfall despite the compromising line of its leadership. In Morocco, against the backdrop of the *Mouvement 20 Février*'s (M20Fev) mobilisations, most labour confederations supported a Palace-led constitutional reform that guaranteed the continuity of the incumbent regime.

North African Labour: Class Analysis and Labour Institutions

The above-described outcomes appear paradoxical in light of those pre-2011 studies of Moroccan and Tunisian trade unionism that – while not necessarily working within an institutionalist theoretical framework – tended to stress the weight of institutional arrangements, leaving issues pertaining to class struggle out of the picture or relegated to a secondary role. After independence was achieved in both countries in 1956, Tunisia's UGTT was incorporated as the single trade union associated with the populist regime, while Moroccan trade unionism was progressively marginalised from the ruling coalition. Starting from the consideration that the UGTT was tied to the regime while the Moroccan unions were kept at a distance, some authors – to whom this research is in any case indebted – underestimated the mobilising potential of Tunisian labour because of their focus on the system of labour-state relations called here populist corporatism (e.g. Bellin 2002), while others overstated that of Moroccan trade unions because of their focus on trade union pluralism (e.g. Cammett and Posusney 2010).

After the 2011 uprisings, class struggle came back on the agenda, thanks in particular to Joel Beinin's work (2016). Following Hèla Yousfi (2015), Beinin showed that, despite the fact that the UGTT's top leadership adopted a policy of compromise with Ben Ali's regime, workers and rank-and-file union militants were able to pressure the union leadership to wield the confederation's infrastructure in support of the mobilisations. This thesis starts from Beinin and Yousfi's work but expands upon it

empirically – bringing "union pluralist" Morocco into the picture – and theoretically – using a heterodox conception of the working class that is not limited to manual waged workers.

In order to answer the research questions, this thesis deploys a historical sociological approach centred on autonomist Marxism (see Cleaver 2000; Tronti 1966) and critically appropriating elements of historical institutionalism (see Collier and Collier 1979; 1991). A historical approach was chosen not because the events that took place, say, during the struggle for independence can explain by themselves the outcomes of the 2011 uprisings, but because balances of class power and labour institutions are best seen as historically constructed through successive rounds of class struggles. History allows one to see how these factors were built organically and dynamically in space and time, instead of treating them as discrete and static variables that just happened to "be there" on the eve of the 2011 uprisings. In this endeavour, autonomist Marxism bears two great advantages: it assigns a constituent role to class struggle as a form of contingent collective agency, avoiding the rigidities of traditional Marxism; and it features an expanded notion of the working class, escaping a narrow focus on the workplace struggles of manual waged workers.[3] Following the insights first proposed by the autonomist feminist tradition (see Dalla Costa and James 1972), the working class is understood here as encompassing both waged and unwaged workers. This move opens the analysis of the relationships between trade unions and workers to a much richer range of phenomena and subjects, including the community struggles of non-unionised precarious workers that were central in the 2011 uprisings.

These theoretical lenses are applied to three aspects of Moroccan and Tunisian society: working-class composition, labour institutions, and working-class power (see Chapter 2). In autonomist Marxism, working-class composition refers to the technical organisation of the working class as labour-power (e.g. sectors of employment, educational levels, wage structures, etc.) and to its political capacity to resist and attack its very condition as labour-power (e.g. forms of consciousness, resistance, organisation, etc.). Labour institutions, instead, are the systems of established norms and organisations that mediate relations between workers and capital (e.g. trade unions, collective bargaining, social dialogue, etc.). Finally, working-class power

[3] This does not mean that such struggles are unimportant, but simply that they are not the only form of struggle relevant to understanding the phenomena under investigation.

refers to workers' capacity to mobilise for their class interests, and it is thus related to a given working-class composition.

This research holds that the different levels of working-class power existing in Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 uprisings are the most important factor for understanding the divergent roles of the trade unions in those mobilisations. Different levels of working-class power also contribute – alongside other factors – to explain why the political change obtained by the uprisings was more limited in Morocco than in Tunisia. In fact, the Moroccan regime maintained its undemocratic character, while Tunisia is, for the moment, a representative democracy. Additionally, differences in Morocco and Tunisia's political institutions – particularly labour institutions – facilitated the fact that, in Morocco, the trade unions contributed to (limited) change in a gradual and negotiated way, while change in Tunisia took place in an abrupt and insurrectional manner. This is because, due to party mediation between labour and the state, trade union fragmentation, social dialogue, and the absence of a former populist social pact, the Moroccan regime had a more flexible system of labour institutions compared to the Tunisian one.

The findings of the thesis can thus be schematically summarised as follows:

-A relatively high level of working-class power facilitated a more active role of the trade unions in workers' protests for social change and contributed – with other factors – to a more extensive increase in democracy (Tunisia). Conversely, a relatively low level of working-class power facilitated a more passive role of the trade unions in workers' protests for social change and contributed – along with other factors – to a more limited democratic advance (Morocco).

-A relatively rigid system of political institutions – particularly labour institutions – contributed to the fact that workers and trade unions promoted change in an abrupt and insurrectional manner (Tunisia). Conversely, a relatively flexible system of political institutions – particularly labour institutions – contributed to the fact that workers and trade unions promoted change in a gradual and negotiated manner (Morocco).[4]

The order of presentation of these two sets of findings indicates a different degree of importance. In other words, it was the level of working-class power that had an impact on the direction and magnitude of the trade unions' intervention in the 2011

[4] It should be emphasised that these are not universal claims, but only relate to the cases under study.

uprisings, while the institutional setting is only relevant to understand some of the modalities in which this intervention took place.

These findings do not idealise Tunisia as a workers' paradise – far from it. Tunisian workers' power is high *relative* to the standards of a staunchly labour-repressive region. The 2011 Arab uprisings' "modest harvest" in terms of democratisation (see Brownlee *et al.* 2013; 2015) can also be seen as a consequence of, *among other factors*, the high labour-repressiveness of the MENA.[5]

This account should not be read in deterministic terms. Working-class power, even in its most "structural" elements like the sectorial location of the workers in the economy, is historically constructed through successive rounds of contingent class struggles and can change through further conflicts. Labour institutions also emerge as outcomes of class struggles, but once in place they tend to partially "freeze" and thus to reproduce themselves, within limits, regardless of shifts in the existing balance of class power. A given balance of class power, in turn, indicates a certain distribution of resources between classes, pointing to a range of likelier outcomes for a particular social conflict. Yet it should always be kept in mind that actual outcomes and the ways in which they occur can in no way be pre-determined, ignoring the agency of social actors that mobilise class power through contingent strategies. History is rich in events that happened against all odds.

This thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in two principal ways. First, at the time of writing, there exists no published comparative study of Moroccan and Tunisian trade unionism. The comparison proposed here addresses the puzzle of why the radically different systems of labour institutions existing in the two countries did not produce the outcomes expected by institution-based approaches. The thesis relies largely on original empirical material collected through a lengthy period of fieldwork. This includes 94 semi-structured interviews with trade unionists and activists, a digitalised press archive on labour-related issues of over 2,500 items, and the analysis of labour legislation, socioeconomic statistics, memoirs of labour activists, and other documents produced by the state and trade unions. Second, unlike other studies, this research includes non-unionised, precarious workers in the analysis of the relations between the working class and the trade unions, going beyond mobilisations within

[5] As an illustration of this, the ITUC Global Rights Index identifies the MENA as the worst region for fundamental rights at work (ITUC 2015). While the ITUC's methodology cannot be considered conclusive, this claim seems very plausible.

the workplace or in the framework of labour organisations. This is important given that precarious employment is severely widespread and has become a politically salient issue. This thesis assesses the role of trade unions not primarily through an institutional framework but rather through the lens of workers' struggles, in this expanded conception, over time. In this way, it avoids reducing the working class, even heuristically, to its official organisations, and it underlines the potential for workers' collective agency to unsettle institutionalised arrangements.

The Trade Unions in the Uprisings: Between the Hammer and the Anvil

This thesis features a literature review on workers and trade unions in North Africa (Chapter 1), a presentation of the theory and methods used for the research (Chapter 2), a historical exploration of trajectories of class struggles and their impact on labour institutions in Morocco and Tunisia (Chapters 3 and 4), a comparison of levels of working-class power in the two countries on the eve of the 2011 uprisings (Chapter 5), and an in-depth investigation of the strategies of the relevant actors, particularly the trade unionists, in the 2011 uprisings (Chapters 6 and 7). All empirical chapters are based on data collected during fieldwork, although the two historical chapters also benefited significantly from the coding of secondary sources.

Chapter 1, the literature review, discusses the existing academic literature on workers and trade unions in North Africa. First, the chapter assesses the usefulness of the pre-2011 literature for understanding the role of the unions in the 2011 uprisings, arguing that "class-based" approaches (e.g. Hamzaoui 2013; Posusney 1997) provide a more adequate framework than "institution-based" ones (e.g. Bellin 2002; Cammett and Posusney 2010). In fact, the latter minimised the disruptive potential of Tunisian labour and overstated the capacity for reform of Moroccan trade unions. Second, the discussion of the published works on labour in the 2011 uprisings shows that, while recent years have seen a revival of class-based research (e.g. Alexander and Bassiouny 2014; Beinin 2016), this did not address the puzzle of why labour in "single-trade union" Tunisia had a more active role in the 2011 uprisings than labour in "union pluralist" Morocco. Third, the review of the conceptualisations of the working class deployed so far to study North African workers (e.g. Bourdieu 1963; Fanon 2004) points to the fact that such notions are too narrow to grasp the political significance of precarious (including unwaged) workers in the 2011 uprisings.

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical and methodological tools deployed to

understand working-class composition, labour institutions, and working-class power. The thesis uses an autonomist-inspired understanding of the working class, which extends the concept to all those dispossessed of significant ownership and control of capital, encompassing also all subordinate forms of unwaged labour (see Cleaver 2000). This thesis shows how the post-independence trend towards rapidly rising employment security was suspended in the neoliberal phase, posing a new challenge to the trade unions. Precarious workers face severe difficulties in advancing their interests through the trade unions, and usually act collectively outside of them, recurring to non-institutionalised repertoires of contention. The mobilisations of precarious workers, however, also constituted a pressure on the trade unions to act upon their grievances.

Starting from this expanded conception of the working class, the reduction of the class to its official organisations – the trade unions – appears as an excessive simplification (Zerowork Collective 1992). This is why this thesis disaggregates labour institutions into the institutionalised relations among workers, trade unions, the state, and capital. The trade unions are mediators between workers and capital; they are perpetually subject to pressures from below from workers (both unionised and non-unionised) and pressures from above from the undemocratic tendencies of the trade union hierarchy, as well as from the state and capital, which have an interest in using them as vehicles to control the workers (Hyman 1975).

This thesis analyses the strategies that authoritarian states deploy in their attempts to control the trade unions along three dimensions: substantial inducements, organisational inducements, and constraints. *Substantial inducements* are direct concessions to the workers, which the regime provides in the hope of securing their consent. *Organisational inducements* are benefits to the trade union as an organisation and are thus primarily in the interest of the trade union officials. *Constraints* are sanctions on workers and trade unionists that refuse to comply with the regime's policies despite the inducements provided. Different combinations of constraints and inducements give rise to different systems of labour institutions, which can be more or less responsive to struggles from below and changes in the balance of class power. When they are relatively unresponsive, they are rigid and thus vulnerable to abrupt and insurrectional change. When they are more responsive, they have greater flexibility and are more amenable to gradual and negotiated change.

Finally, this thesis operationalises working-class power as existing both within

and without the trade unions. Following Erik Olin Wright, working-class power is analysed along the dimensions of structural power – depending on the position of workers in the economic system – and associational power – depending on the strength of workers' organisations (Wright 2000).

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a historical account of the trajectories of class struggles and of the transformations of class compositions and labour institutions in Morocco and Tunisia from independence to the eve of the 2011 uprisings. They show how divergent trajectories of class struggles led to different systems of labour institutions, as well as different levels of working-class power.

In Morocco, workers participated in the struggle for national liberation, but they did so through a Moroccan trade union confederation only in the later stages of the conflict, as the *Union Marocain du Travail* (UMT) was founded in 1955. After independence was achieved in 1956, the National Movement competed with the Palace to secure the control of the state, but it was defeated and became increasingly fragmented. The system of labour institutions that consequently emerged can be designated as "authoritarian conservative pluralism". "Authoritarian" refers to high constraints, "conservative" refers to low substantial inducements, and "pluralism" refers to a configuration of organisational inducements that allowed for union pluralism. The regime led by Hassan II was based on a conservative social coalition led by landlords and rural notables; the trade unions found only a marginal place in the new order.

During the cycle of struggle of the 1970-80s, the severity of state repression prevented the New Left that originated in the universities from building an important presence in the trade unions. Harsh protests and crackdowns marked Morocco's transition to neoliberalism. After structural adjustment, however, the Moroccan regime slowly changed through a partial political opening engineered by the Palace to contain social struggles. It thus became what can be called "semi-authoritarian conservative pluralist". The balance of class power remained relatively unfavourable to workers, while the pluralist and semi-authoritarian character of the regime endowed it with significant institutional flexibility. Therefore, in the cycle of struggle that reached a peak in the 2011 uprisings, the regime faced relatively weak working-class power and at the same time its institutions were sufficiently flexible to allow it to successfully defuse the grassroots mobilisations.

In Tunisia, the UGTT was founded in 1946 and participated in the National

Movement from an early stage, in alliance with the nationalist *Neo-Destour*[6] Party. The regime that emerged with independence can be described as an instance of "authoritarian populist corporatism". It was characterised by high constraints, relatively high substantial inducements, and a configuration of organisational inducements based on a single trade union confederation. The post-independence regime was thus based on a populist alliance between the state bureaucracy, the "petty bourgeois" leadership of the *Neo-Destour*, and the secure workers organised in the UGTT.

The significant role the UGTT had played during the struggle for independence helped it to secure an important place in the new political system. The UGTT was integrated into a triangular state-party-union architecture, in which the bureaucracies of each organisation closely interpenetrated one another. However, Tunisia's system of labour institutions differed from typical populist corporatism (e.g. Egypt) in that the UGTT always preserved a significant degree of autonomy from the party and the state, the scope of which varied depending on the political conjuncture.

During the 1970s, a vigorous strike wave developed, finding its main strongholds in the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) that were created as part of Tunisia's former import-substitution industrialisation programme. In this context, a new generation of radical activists coming from the student movement entered the UGTT. These mobilisations culminated in the 26 January 1978 UGTT national general strike, which was violently crushed by the security forces. The state cracked down again on the UGTT in 1985, as it was clearing the way for neoliberal structural adjustment. However, despite their defeat, these struggles significantly altered the triangular state-party-union architecture – an achievement with far-reaching, long-term consequences that did not obtain in the other Arab populist countries. On the one hand, a solid leftist opposition had emerged within the confederation. On the other hand, after this bitter conflict, the top union leadership ceased to be a reliable ally of the regime.

Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, who took power on 7 November 1987, needed a social basis to contain the Islamists and his solution was to reconstitute the corporatist alliance with the UGTT in a neoliberal "post-populist" form. In the neoliberal phase, the Tunisian system of labour institutions can thus be characterised as "authoritarian

[6] *Destour* means "constitution" in Arabic.

post-populist corporatist". Constraints remained high, substantial inducements were partially retrenched, and organisational inducements were reorganised in a more informal and clientelist fashion. In the 2000s, Tunisia still featured a relatively high (for the standards of the region) level of working-class power, but its system of labour institutions can be identified as rigid because the single trade union arrangement remained in place and the regime allowed for even less civil and political rights compared to the Moroccan one.

The historical chapters highlight how past struggles contingently construct the conditions of the present. Against this background, Chapter 5 analyses working-class composition and trade unionism in Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 uprisings to compare the respective levels of working-class power. The comparison shows that, on the eve of the 2011 uprisings, working-class power – both structural and associational – was higher in Tunisia than in Morocco. This meant that, in Tunisia, the trade unions faced stronger pressures from below to mobilise, and at the same time had more power to do so, relative to Morocco.

Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate how different levels of working-class power and different types of labour institutions contributed to shape how the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions behaved during the 2011 uprisings. In Morocco, because of relatively low working-class power, the trade unions faced weaker pressures to act on behalf of the mobilised workers and stronger pressures from the state in the opposite direction. The mobilisations remained fragmented, as the protests of precarious and secure workers did not merge with the M20Fev. The trade unions, on their part, accepted to negotiate a social dialogue agreement with the regime, which featured generous socioeconomic concessions, especially for public sector workers. The Palace then proposed a constitutional reform, engineered by an unelected commission, that offered several concessions but did not alter the undemocratic nature of the regime. While the M20Fev boycotted the constitutional referendum, all significant trade union confederations endorsed the Yes campaign, contributing to its victory, with the exception of the *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (CDT). However, even the CDT did not support the M20Fev with radical actions such as national or regional general strikes.

Strictly speaking, in Morocco there was never a populist social pact, which probably lowered the expectations of many Moroccans. Pressures for social change from below were weaker in Morocco than in Tunisia. In fact, in the kingdom, a

situation of generalised clashes between protesters and police accompanied by political general strikes did not materialise. The mobilisations consisted of periodic mass demonstrations, isolated clashes, and workplace-level strikes. Due to the flexibility of the institutional system, these weaker pressures from below were accommodated in a gradual and negotiated manner. Trade union fragmentation, former social dialogue, and party mediation between labour and the state facilitated the integration of the unions into negotiations with the regime over minor reforms. However, the most important point is that – due to the low structural and associational power of the Moroccan working class – it was difficult for the trade unions to contribute to significant change. This thesis thus gives an interpretation of the Moroccan regime discrepant from culturalist narratives that focus on the King's traditional legitimacy and institutionalist accounts that highlight the state's partial political openings. The continuity of the Moroccan regime is in fact also rooted in *power*, and an important aspect of such power is the balance of class power – relatively favourable to the economic elites – that the regime managed to enforce in the course of successive rounds of class struggles throughout the country's history.

In Tunisia, because of relatively high working-class power, the trade unions faced strong pressures to act on behalf of mobilised workers. These pressures initially came from the precarious and non-unionised fractions of the working class in the marginalised regions, where they revolted for secure employment and local development. During the early stages of the uprising, in December 2010 in the region of Sidi Bouzid, politicised UGTT militants – mostly employed in public administration – mobilised to support the grievances of the precarious workers and to spread the protests. When the police fired live bullets at protesters, the opposition trade unionists seized the occasion to step up their pressure on the UGTT National Executive Committee (NEC), demanding a national general strike. On 11 January 2011, the UGTT National Administrative Commission authorised regional general strikes. The first mass demonstration of the uprising outside of the marginalised regions was the Sfax general strike, which took place on 12 January 2011 and marked a steep qualitative change in the uprising. On 14 January 2011, as disorder spread to several areas of the country, including the suburbs of Tunis, the Greater Tunis general strike took place and its demonstration turned into a series of clashes in the vicinity of the Ministry of the Interior. That evening, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. After the downfall of the regime, the UGTT – as the largest civil society organisation in the country –

took a major role as mediator between the revolutionary movements and the state, and as a broker of the political transition that led to democratisation. However, while this political process succeeded in the difficult task of expanding civil and political rights, it did not manage to address the demands for social justice that were at the heart of the uprising.

The protagonists of the Tunisian uprising were the precarious workers – the main "victims" of the neoliberal suspension of the post-independence populist social pact. The developmentalist promise of a steady expansion of secure employment had clearly become a mirage by the 2000s. Tunisian precarious workers arguably had more resources to mobilise than the Moroccan ones, as indicated by Tunisia's larger welfare spending, higher educational levels, and better performance on human development indicators. We can see here an illustration of the contradictory nature of substantial inducements: they are supplied by the state to seek consent from the working class, but they spark discontent when they are retrenched and at the same time they provide workers with resources to act upon that discontent. However, it is unlikely that the precarious alone would have succeeded in overthrowing the regime. In this context, the politicised UGTT militants managed to mobilise the associational power of the trade union in support of the protests, and to extend the latter to the secure workers through the regional general strikes. Significantly, this happened despite the fact that UGTT Secretary General (SG) Abdessalem Jerad continued to seek a compromise with Ben Ali until the final hour.

The Conclusion suggests that contemporary research on North African labour can benefit from the insights contained within this thesis regarding the significance of precarious workers' struggles and the relations between such mobilisations and the trade unions. The unions must manoeuvre between the hammer of a highly diverse and fluid working class and the anvil of a state that depends on capital for its reproduction. Workers still can and do use the trade unions to advance their interests, which is indeed part of what happened in the recent history of Tunisia. However, it is never guaranteed that the unions will be more responsive to pressures from below than to pressures from above. In the study of such dynamics, future scholarship could benefit – as this thesis does – from the autonomist feminists' theorisations of unwaged labour and the community as incorporated into the circuit of capital accumulation.

By showing how historical rounds of social and particularly class conflict contributed to shaping the divergent roles of the trade unions in the 2011 uprisings of

Morocco and Tunisia, the thesis fills a significant gap in the published literature and shows the merits of a historical, class-based and struggle-centred approach to studying trade unionism. Comparing "union pluralist" Morocco with "single-trade union" Tunisia, it addresses the puzzle of why radically different systems of labour institutions did not lead to the outcomes expected by the "institution-based" literature. Furthermore, by deploying a heterodox, autonomist-inspired conceptualisation of the working class, which had never been employed to study North African workers, this thesis sheds new light on the relations between the subjectivities that came to the fore in the 2011 uprisings and long-standing labour confederations.

Chapter 1 – Literature Review: Workers and Trade Unions in North Africa

Introduction

Labour is far from being among the most researched topics in North Africa, as state elites or Islamist movements have clearly attracted more attention. However, a sizeable bibliography on the topic has been accumulated over the last decades. This literature review covers North Africa – rather than the whole Arab world or the MENA region – for reasons of limited space but also because the class compositions of other Arab countries (particularly the Gulf monarchies) are extremely different from those of Morocco and Tunisia, making meaningful comparisons more problematic.

This chapter first assesses the adequacy of the pre-2011 literature on North African organised labour for understanding the role of the trade unions in the 2011 uprisings. It argues that, despite their merits, some of the most important works on the topic (e.g. Bellin 2002; Cammett and Posusney 2010) overemphasised the significance of the institutional framework and underestimated the relevance of class struggles and class power as elements that transcend the trade unions themselves and their institutionalised relations with the state. As a result, "institution-based" works minimised the disruptive potential of Tunisian labour and overstated that of Moroccan unions. This thesis is therefore closer to what are called here "class-based" approaches (e.g. Hamzaoui 2013; Posusney 1997).

The second section shows how the most important academic contributions on labour in the 2011 uprisings brought class struggle and class power back in (e.g. Alexander and Bassiouny 2014; Beinin 2016), correcting the formalist bias that institution-based approaches risk. While this thesis builds on such works, the latter did not address the puzzle identified by the first section of the chapter (i.e. why some of the former literature minimised the disruptive potential of Tunisian labour and overstated that of Moroccan unions). By bringing Morocco into the comparison, this thesis breaks the virtual monopoly of post-populist countries (especially Egypt and Tunisia) within studies of labour in the 2011 uprisings, and investigates the importance of differences in labour institutions versus differences in balances of class power.

Finally, this thesis departs from the relatively narrow conceptions of working class deployed by the existing studies on North African labour and adopts one that allows the shedding of new light on the relations between the trade unions and the "unemployed youth" that kick-started the 2011 Arab uprisings. The third section elaborates on this point by presenting the notions of working class adopted by authors who researched North African workers. The classic studies on the topic have considered precarious and secure workers as belonging to two different social classes, and this assumption has gone unchallenged in more recent publications.

This overview, while signalling a wide empirical gap in the literature on Moroccan trade unionism, also points to the benefits of a class-based, struggle-centred approach to understanding the role of the trade unions in the 2011 uprisings. In fact, this allows for a clearer grasp of how workers' power and agency can unsettle established institutional arrangements, without renouncing an analysis of how these very institutions mediate – or fail to mediate – such struggles. The literature review also demonstrates the absence of publications on workers and trade unions in North Africa that employ an expanded notion of working class, despite the fact that many of the 2011 uprisings' protagonists cannot be considered workers in the narrow sense deployed by most authors.

1.1 The Trade Unions: Between the Working Class and the State

This section first presents the existing literature on North African trade unions, before concentrating on how different pre-2011 approaches on the relations between workers, unions, and the state are useful for understanding the 2011 uprisings. For the sake of simplicity, two broad approaches are singled out: the "institution-based" approach (e.g. Bellin 2002; Cammett and Posusney 2010) and the "class-based" approach (e.g. Hamzaoui 2013; Posusney 1997). While "institution-based" approaches tend to consider the unions as proxies for the working class – which allows them to focus on labour-state relations as trade union-state relations – "class-based" approaches treat the working class as analytically autonomous from labour institutions. This thesis locates itself within the second camp, in order to take into account the partial divergences of interests between workers and trade unionists and the possibility that sections of each group use their agency to foster such interests.

A sizeable body of literature has developed around North African trade unionism during the decades between decolonisation and the 2011 uprisings, although

this clearly remains a relatively under-researched topic. Probably because of its geopolitical and demographical importance, Egypt is the country that has attracted most international research efforts.[7] Algerian trade unionism has also been the focus of some international and national research, although this remains more circumscribed.[8]

For what concerns the cases of this thesis, Tunisia features an extremely rich national literature on trade unionism. Trade unionism, and the UGTT in particular, have historically held a central position in the country's politics, which has stimulated the attention of many Tunisian scholars.[9] This academic literature is complemented by several memoirs and analyses by trade union cadres and activists that are of great value to researchers.[10] International research on Tunisian trade unionism, instead, was extremely scant before the 2011 uprisings, with a few exceptions.[11]

Except for Libya, Moroccan trade unionism is probably the least researched in North Africa. International research before the 2011 Arab uprisings was just as scarce as that on Tunisian labour.[12] However, the production of national academic research[13] and of memoirs of trade union cadres[14] is less abundant compared to the Tunisian case. As the next section confirms, the gap in the literature – especially the English-language literature – is extremely wide when it comes to Moroccan trade unionism.

After independence, in the North African populist republics (to which Morocco was the exception), the political alliance between the trade unions and the nationalist parties during the national liberation struggle led to the integration of the trade unions into a corporatist triangular state-party-union architecture through a hierarchical and centralised single labour confederation.[15] Organised labour thus became part of the social coalition underlying the populist regimes and, in normal times, it contributed to

[7] E.g. Aidi 2009; Alexander 2010; Beinin 2009; 2011; Bianchi 1989; Goldberg 1992; Paczynska 2009; Posusney 1997; Pratt 1998; – in English – Couland 1978; Tomiche 1974; – in French.
[8] E.g. Alexander 1996a; 2002; Branine *et al.* 2008; Chelghoum *et al.* 2016; – in English – Benallegue 1981; Benamrouche 2000; Weiss 1970; – in French.
[9] E.g. Zouari 1989; – in English – Belaïd 1989; Ben Hamida 2003; Bessis 1985; Hamza 1992; Hamzaoui 1984; 1999; 2013; Khiari 2000; Kraiem 1976; 1980; Sraieb 1985; Tlili 1984; Zghal 1998; – in French.
[10] E.g. Achour 1989; Allouche 2016; Amami 2008; Azaiez 1980; Haddad 2013; Kraiem 2013; Zeghidi 1989; 1997; 2007; – in French. Memoirs are referenced in the "Other Primary Sources".
[11] E.g. Alexander 1996a; 1996b; Bellin 2002; Liauzu 1996; – in English – Liauzu 1978; – in French.
[12] See Clement and Paul 1984; Forst 1970; 1976; – in English – Ayache 1982; 1990; 1993; Catusse 2001; – in French.
[13] Abouhani 1995; Ben Seddik 1986; 1990; Benhlal 1985; Bouharrou 1997; El Aoufi and Hollard 2004; Menouni 1979; – in French.
[14] E.g. Benjelloun 2002-03; – in Arabic; Bazwi 1993; Ben Bouazza 1992; – in French.
[15] See Ahmad 1966; Ayubi 1995; El-Sabbagh 1988; Gallissot 1990; Moore 1970.

their stability by providing them with a base of organised mass support in exchange for substantial socioeconomic concessions.

Populist nationalism in its Pan-Arabist form was the central cultural element of North African organised labour (see Beinin and Lockman 1988). Nationalist ideology and strategy allowed the trade union leaderships to claim that they stood for the national working class as a whole. This equation, however, happened through two rhetorical reductions. First, the whole working class (unionised and non-unionised) was reduced to the single labour confederation. Second, the whole trade union organisation was reduced to its top leadership.

Yet, with the transition to neoliberalism, populist corporatism entered a crisis.[16] Economic liberalisation, with its retrenchment of workers' socioeconomic rights, made it harder for the single labour confederation to control its constituencies and its rank-and-file militants, prompting explosions of resistance outside of the trade union framework. On the one hand, this slowed down the pace of economic restructuring and, on the other, it sowed the seeds of the implosion of authoritarian corporatism in its populist form. The top union leaders' equation of the working class with the single labour confederation was thus shown to be false, as the unions were often perceived as being closer to the state than to the workers.

The problem of the relations between workers, trade unions, and the state has been treated in different ways by various authors. A first approach is the "institution-based" one, deployed by authors that – while not necessarily embracing an institutionalist theoretical framework – stress the importance of institutionalised relations between the trade unions and the state. A well-known case is *Stalled Democracy* by Eva Bellin (2002). The book investigates the role of capital and labour in democratisation processes through the case study of Tunisia. It is a successful and rich work, which has influenced the debate on social classes and democracy beyond the MENA region (see Mahoney 2003). Bellin claims that, despite the prevailing theoretical expectations, labour and capital are unlikely to push for democratisation as long as they are dependent on state sponsorship for the protection of their interests. This is a common situation in late developing countries like Tunisia, where it is necessary for the state to play a leading role in promoting capitalist development. In Tunisia, therefore, labour backed Ben Ali's authoritarian regression because it was

[16] See Aidi 2009; Paczynska 2009; Posusney 1997; Pratt 1998.

linked to the state by the corporatist arrangement, granting benefits to the UGTT and its members. Bellin summarises her argument as follows:

> [W]hile state sponsorship nurtures the power of industrialists and labor, it continues to undermine their autonomy. Both social forces still find their fortunes beholden to the goodwill of the state, and this dependence, combined with other factors such as fear, for capitalists, and "aristocratic position", for organized labor, makes them diffident about democratization. (Bellin 2002, p. 144)

However, the important role of workers and of the UGTT in Tunisia's 2011 uprisings and the subsequent democratisation process is surprising in light of Bellin's argument. In fact, during the 2000s, the Tunisian state's sponsorship of organised labour did not change significantly.

From the beginning of the book, Bellin seems to use the phrases "organised labour" and "social class" interchangeably (*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3).[17] Furthermore, when supplying evidence that labour stood by the regime in the 1990s, Bellin provides a list of decisions taken by the UGTT top leadership (endorsement of Ben Ali's presidential campaigns, lack of support for human rights groups, etc.) (*Ibid.*, pp. 147-9). However, by doing so, Bellin risks taking at face value the rhetorical double reduction made by top union leaders: the leadership stands for the whole organisation, and the organisation stands for the whole working class. Therefore, if the union's top leadership supports the regime, the working class supports the regime.

Of course, the working class cannot take political decisions in the same manner as a formally organised collective actor. However, sections of the working class can act in politically significant ways outside of their official organisations. In her historical account of the development of Tunisia's labour-state relations (*Ibid.*, pp. 89-120), Bellin provides much evidence of rank-and-file action outside of the UGTT or, even more, within the UGTT but against the choices of the top leadership (*Ibid.*, p. 136). However, these phenomena are not theorised, and thus they disappear from her conclusions. Arguably, this leads Bellin to underestimate the disruptive potential of the internal fractures within the UGTT:

[17] The ambiguity of the word "labour", which can mean both workers and trade unions, does not help.

> The resurgence of strike activity instigated by the base during the late 1970s and again in the 1980s suggests a streak of persistent independence within labor that the state cannot ignore. […] Working class culture and institutions have staying power that prevents the state from entirely subjugating labor. But there is no denying that labor's autonomy has suffered for the past two decades, and the future does not look rosier. (*Ibid.*, p. 140)

However, it was precisely the insurrectional pressures of rank-and-file workers' mobilisations both without and within the UGTT that "unstalled" Tunisia's democracy by undermining the UGTT top leadership's policy of compromise with the regime (see Chapter 7).

Another example of "institution-based" research is a study by Melani Cammett and Marsha Posusney – covering thirteen Arab countries – arguing that there was a positive relation between labour-market liberalisation and trade union rights in the Middle East, but that progress on both variables was uneven: "[R]esource endowments and patterns of state-labor relations, which tend to vary according to authoritarian regime type, largely explain these divergent trends" (Cammett and Posusney 2010, p. 251).

By giving priority to institutional arrangements (in this case trade union pluralism versus single-trade union corporatism), Cammett and Posusney suggested that the country where labour had more leverage was in fact Morocco:

> General political liberalization should enhance union freedoms, and the struggle for organizing rights is intrinsically part of democratization movements. Variation in the authoritarian structures of Middle Eastern countries, and related differences in union–state relations, suggests arenas where progress can be expected, at least in the short term. Thanks to both partisan competition and competitive unionism, Morocco is already furthest along in freedom of association and appears to provide the best environment for additional advancement. […] Thus, this paper lends further support to the comparative finding that single party states appear to have the most resilient form of authoritarianism and suggests the intriguing possibility that some of the historically conservative

> monarchies of the region may ultimately prove to be the most progressive on labor rights. (*Ibid.*, p. 276)

According to the authors: "Moroccan exceptionalism reflects that country's long history of competitive unionism" (*Ibid.*, p. 271). However, this emphasis on the institutional arrangement of competitive unionism is partially misleading. The right to form alternative trade unions is certainly an asset for workers, but union fragmentation is often considered a liability (e.g. Korpi and Shalev 1979). Thus, whether the abundance of labour confederations is positive or negative for workers should be established through historical analysis of the processes through which they came into being, depending on the relative weight of mobilisation from below versus divide-and-conquer tactics from above (see Chapter 2). Indeed, Cammett and Posusney's claim contrasts with the fact that, with the 2011 Arab uprisings, Tunisia democratised while Morocco did not. Furthermore, and despite the presumed effects of the systems of labour institutions in place, Tunisian labour played an important role in the democratisation process, while most Moroccan trade unions contributed to regime continuity. This is a puzzle to which, as shown below, the existing post-2011 uprisings literature provides no solution.

The class-based approach is exemplified by Marsha Posusney's earlier work, namely *Labour and the State in Egypt* (1997). This book theorises from the start the significance of divergences between workers and the different levels of the trade union hierarchy. Posusney's research combines institutional and cultural analysis to study labour-state relations in the context of neoliberal reform. In doing so, she employs E. P. Thompson's concept of "moral economy", which indicates a cultural understanding of certain mutual obligations between subaltern groups and authorities (Thompson 1971).[18] The subaltern rebel when they perceive that those in power are not fulfilling such obligations. Posusney thus specifies that Egyptian secure workers' rebellions against neoliberal reforms were restorative in character: they aimed to restore the paternalist moral economy of the populist period (Posusney 1997, p. 21).

For the purposes of this thesis, the most important features of Posusney's work are the "disaggregation of the categories of 'state' and 'labor' into the different

[18] The concept was first applied to popular mobilisations against neoliberal reform by Walton and Seddon (1994), in order to explain the Global South food riots that also affected Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia.

organisational and individual players" (*Ibid.*, p. 4). As Posusney writes:

> [E]gypt's trade unions have historically excluded large segments of the working class […]. By the same token, unionized workers sometimes resort to organizing outside of the union structure when it fails to address their concerns. (*Ibid.*, p. 14)

Since its creation in 1957, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) has been incorporated into an authoritarian corporatist system of labour institutions and its leaders, imposed by the state, were expected to insure the compliance of unionised workers with the directives of the regime. Workers, however, were able to rebel against those neoliberal reforms which they saw as breaking their moral economy. They took action independent of the ETUF or pressured ETUF leaders to support their grievances.[19] The ETUF's top leaders were thus caught in a dilemma between responding to the regime or to their own constituencies (*Ibid.*, pp. 22-8).

This thesis's most important point of divergence with Posusney is that her attention on institutions and culture, while laudable, leaves under-theorised the question of working-class power. Posusney conceptualises working-class power cursorily and only in terms of "union capacity", which is considered to be an "institutional factor" (*Ibid.*, p. 9). However, the reduction of working-class power to union capacity is inconsistent with Posusney's refusal to collapse workers into trade unions. In this respect, Bellin's multi-dimensional conceptualisation of working-class power (Bellin 2002, pp. 123-6) is closer to the one adopted here. An approach centred on restorative moral economy, in fact, proved useful in understanding workers' initial reactions to neoliberalism, but it is ill-equipped to grasp the role of workers and trade unions in the 2011 Arab uprisings.

Another important class-based contribution on North African trade unionism that theorises the distinction between workers and unions is Salah Hamzaoui's 1,500-page sociology of the UGTT cadres, titled *Pratiques syndicales et pouvoir*

[19] Posusney found that different reforms impacted upon the trade union hierarchy differently depending on their scope (*Ibid.*, pp. 244-7). When a reform violating the workers' moral economy was local (e.g. the privatisation of a plant), the affected workers mobilised against it but without being able to get the support of the confederation. When a reform of this kind was national, the combined pressure of the country's rank-and-file brought the trade union top leadership to voice opposition.

politique (Hamzaoui 2013).[20] This work aims to understand the "relations between the trade union confederation and the regime, on the one hand, and between the union leaders and the rank-and-file workers […], on the other" (*Ibid.*, p. 6).[21]

Hamzaoui mobilised an immense volume of data in the form of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and quantitative surveys – also going beyond the workplace to include family relations, education, or the regional background of the trade unionists – to show how the trade union high cadres constitute a mediating layer between workers and the state, and how this role gives them the power to "escape rank-and-file control and achieve a certain autonomy"[22] (*Ibid.*, p. 10) from workers and the state at once. This autonomy is grounded in the fact that, on the one hand, the union provides workers with a defence from employers and the state which they could not otherwise have, and, on the other, it provides the state with a mechanism of control over the workers themselves.

However, while Hamzaoui refers multiple times to rank-and-file pressures on the union, one cannot escape – throughout the book – a deep sense of pessimism over the significance of such pressures. Internal dissent tends to be presented as ritualised and thus contained (e.g. *Ibid.*, pp. 1280-98) and workers' struggles as cyclically co-opted by the union leadership to reinforce its position *vis-à-vis* the state. There is much truth to this interpretation – indeed, the UGTT's post-2011 trajectory can be interpreted in these terms – but this thesis attempts to underline also the other side of autonomy, namely the possibility of workers' autonomy in pressuring the union leaders to take decisions they would not have otherwise taken.

This thesis insists that a class-based approach is better equipped to understand the role of the trade unions in the 2011 Arab uprisings. In fact, institution-based works that underline the significance of corporatist labour-state relations for authoritarian resilience in Tunisia and of union pluralism for democratic reform in Morocco end up minimising workers' capacity to challenge and destabilise labour institutions. This thesis argues that while labour institutions are crucial in mediating social conflict, they should be analysed in their relation to the balance of class power and the course of class struggles that transcend labour institutions, particularly the trade unions. This

[20] While this *thèse d'état* was published in 2013, the vast majority of it was conceived and written before 2011. Hamzaoui's work is both academic and related to his personal experience as a UGTT left activist in the 1970s and SG of the higher teaching federation in the 1980s.
[21] Translated from French by the author.
[22] Translated from French by the author.

thesis can thus be located within the class-based camp, which is more adequate to understand the pressures on the union cadres coming from unionised and non-unionised workers, and to consider internal divergences *within* the trade unions themselves. This strategy accounts for the possibility of workers' autonomy from institutionalised trade unions, which manifests itself in groups of workers operating within the trade union to influence its leadership or acting outside of the union framework altogether.

However, as the next section shows, even the class-based academic works that appeared after the 2011 uprisings did not address the puzzle stemming from the analysis of Cammett and Posusney's (2010) work, i.e. why the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions' role in the 2011 uprisings diverged in unexpected ways, and what was the respective importance of labour institutions and of the balance of class power in contributing to such roles.

1.2 North African Workers' Mobilisations in the 2011 Arab Uprisings

This section provides a literature review of recent academic interventions on workers and trade unions in the 2011 Arab uprisings within the broader debate on the outcomes of the Arab Spring (see Achcar 2016; Hinnebusch 2015a; 2015b). The post-2011 period saw a revival of class-based approaches (e.g. Alexander and Bassiouny 2014; Beinin 2016), as the struggles that played out during the uprisings made evident the divergences between trade union leaderships and mobilised groups of workers.

Most of the published literature on the topic affirms that workers' mobilisations, within the established trade unions or outside of them, were an important – if often unacknowledged – element of the 2011 uprisings, and that the uprisings' fortunes were to some extent tied to those of workers' struggles. Therefore, the uprisings' "modest harvest" in respect to democracy (see Brownlee *et al.* 2013; 2015) is also linked to the high labour-repressiveness of the region (ITUC 2015).

In the historical debate on social classes and democratisation, some authors argued that the "bourgeoisie" (e.g. Moore 1966) or the "middle-class" (e.g. Lipset 1960) have a privileged role, while others claimed that labour has historically been the most consistent pro-democracy collective actor because democracy is in the interest of the workers (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1985; Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992; Therborn

1977). The importance of workers' mobilisations in recent struggles against authoritarianism has been observed in different parts of the world.[23]

Academic work on labour in the 2011 Arab uprisings has maintained that labour was a significant actor in struggles for social justice and democracy, counterbalancing the excessive attention given to the urban "middle-class" by the mass media and some scholars (e.g. Fukuyama 2013). Much of this research deals with Egypt,[24] which – as seen above – historically has been the Arab country attracting the greatest attention from labour scholars.

Anne Alexander and Mostafa Bassiouny, in their book *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice* (2014), provide an in-depth account of the role of workers' struggles in the 2011 Egyptian uprising. The book presents a historically-grounded analysis of the Egyptian class structure, with particular attention paid to how trends in employment and in the characteristics of the workforce impacted upon workers' capacity for mobilisation. It then goes on to draw a rich empirical account of labour unrest, its organisation, and its political implications, from the strike wave that began in 2006 to General Sisi's military coup in 2013. The authors show how this cycle of struggle against neoliberal reform escaped restorative illusions, emptied out the Nasserist corporatist shell, created new and independent trade unions, and made a crucial contribution to Mubarak's downfall. However, the Egyptian workers' transformative power was limited by the ETUF's relative non-permeability to pressures from below, by the persistence of Nasserist ideology, and – in their view – by the absence of a strong vanguard party (*Ibid.*, pp. 327-9).

The role of workers in the 2011 Egyptian uprising is also touched upon in John Chalcraft's *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Chalcraft 2016), a much broader book that deals with mobilisation, organisation, leadership, and culture, to provide a history of popular mobilisations in the Middle East from the 19th century to the present day. In respect to this thesis, Chalcraft's scope is at once much broader – temporally and geographically – and narrower – singling out politicised movements. Yet this thesis shares with Chalcraft's approach a stress on the role of

[23] Latin America: Collier 1999; Collier and Mahoney 1997; Seidman 1994. Southern Europe: Collier and Mahoney 1997; Fishman 1990. Eastern Europe: Ciobanu 2009; Dale 2005; Ost 1990. Africa: Adler and Webster 2000; Kraus 2007; Seidman 1994. Asia: Katsiaficas 2012; 2013; Kwon and O'Donnell 1999; Sonn 1997.

[24] Adly and Ramadan 2015; Alexander and Bassiouny 2014; Beinin 2012; De Smet 2012; 2016; El-Mahdi 2011; Hartshorn 2018; Taha 2014; Totonchi 2011; Zemni *et al.* 2012.

struggles from below in provoking social change. As he claims: "This history cannot be captured by solely top-down or power-institutional accounts" (Chalcraft 2016, p. 529).

Recently, Tunisian organised labour also came under the spotlight due to the decisive role of rank-and-file trade unionists in the uprising, which became clear as the UGTT turned into a central broker of the post-uprising political negotiations.[25] *L'UGTT, une passion tunisienne* by Hèla Yousfi (2015), translated into English as *Trade Unions and Arab Revolutions: The Case of UGTT* (Yousfi 2017a), is the only book-length work to focus exclusively on the role of trade unionism in the 2011 Tunisian uprising and the ensuing transition period (see also Feltrin 2016). Under Ben Ali, the UGTT played a paradoxical role as both one of the mightiest supporters of the regime and one of its fiercest opponents (Yousfi 2015, pp. 48-56). It is impossible to understand this contradiction without analysing the complexity of the fractures inside the confederation in its interaction with the rest of society. While the UGTT NEC consistently supported Ben Ali in manifold ways – most notably in its endorsement of his candidacy in all the presidential elections in which he ran – a strong opposition current led by left-wing activists was well rooted in the rank-and-file and had penetrated some of the intermediate structures. This cleavage brought the struggle for democracy into the trade union itself and allowed the UGTT's internal opposition to mobilise the infrastructure of the organisation in support of the 2011 uprising (*Ibid.*, pp. 59-98).

After Ben Ali's flight, the UGTT concentrated its efforts on fostering political and constitutional change while protecting a large degree of institutional continuity. As we will see, the trade union confederation became the main broker of a pact between government and opposition. By taking up a function of counter-power against the Islamists in a time when the secular parties were still weakened by their organisational overhaul, the UGTT sacrificed, to a quite large extent, its pressure for the achievement of the core demands of the 2011 uprising, particularly those concerning social justice and the cleansing of the state of old regime incumbents. Yet the trade union certainly played a key role in the consolidation of democratic institutions.

[25] Beinin 2016; Hartshorn 2018; Mizouni 2012; Netterstrøm 2016; Omri 2017; Wilder 2015; Yousfi 2015/2017a; 2017b; Zemni 2013; Zemni *et al.* 2012.

This thesis owes much to Yousfi's fine-grained study of the cleavages and struggles internal to the UGTT. Her account, however, is mainly centred on the UGTT as an organisation interacting with other organisations, institutions, and social movements. This thesis expands upon this, giving a more central place to class analysis and historical comparison.

The advantages of a comparative and historical approach like the one adopted here were demonstrated by Joel Beinin in his comparison of the Egyptian and Tunisian cases, titled *Workers and Thieves* (2016). In this book, Beinin shows how Tunisian workers were better positioned than Egyptian ones to wage struggles for social justice and democracy because of the UGTT's associational power and its permeability to pressures from below.

In Egypt, as Beinin documented, the ETUF was the only legal trade union and it was strongly under state control and more insulated from rank-and-file pressure than the UGTT. For this reason, the impressive spike in labour militancy that preceded the 2011 Egyptian uprising took a localised and weakly organised form. After the uprising, the newly established independent trade unions were too weak and inexperienced to give workers a determining and independent voice in Egypt's bumpy post-25 January 2011 political process, which was dominated by the well-entrenched military establishment and Muslim Brotherhood. The independent trade unions, just like the state-sponsored one, ended up initially endorsing the military-led removal of elected President Mohamed Morsi on 3 July 2013.

In Tunisia, on the other hand, the UGTT's organisational infrastructure, even if dominated by an NEC mostly allied with the regime, provided its politicised rank-and-file militants with a solid and relatively well-endowed nationwide network, which they were able to mobilise to spread the rebellion from the peripheral town of Sidi Bouzid to other areas of the country, and from the "unemployed" (in Beinin's terminology) to more secure workers in public administration and industry through the regional general strikes. The role of these militants in the events gave the UGTT, after its December 2011 Congress, a revolutionary legitimacy of its own that it was able to employ in the subsequent political negotiations, which led to a more democratic outcome compared to the Egyptian case.

Beinin's work indicates that, from a comparative perspective, the fact that Tunisia was the Arab country where workers had stronger mobilisational capacity was a central factor contributing to its democratisation. Jamie Allinson reached the same

conclusion in his comparative assessment of labour in the 2011 uprisings of Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia (Allinson 2015). In a similar vein, Gianni Del Panta holds that authoritarian resilience in Algeria is due, among other things, to labour weakness there (Del Panta 2017).

All these works, however, analysed the post-populist single-trade union regimes, especially Egypt and Tunisia. Therefore, they did not address the puzzle identified in the former section concerning the divergent political roles of the trade unions in countries with radically different systems of labour institutions, and the respective importance of the institutional framework versus the balance of class power. Before 2011, Morocco was the only North African country featuring trade union pluralism, consequently a comparison including Morocco is necessary to address this puzzle.

Recently published academic research on Moroccan labour is very scant and almost non-existent in the English literature. Zemni *et al.* (2012) compared workers' struggles in the 2011 Arab uprisings of Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, but the article – while valuable – contains no substantial analysis of Moroccan trade unionism. Buehler (2015) produced an article showing how, in 2011, the Moroccan unions gained socioeconomic concessions due to political instability. However, the second most recent English-language work on Moroccan unions is a short MERIP report dating from thirty years before (Clement and Paul 1984). At the time of writing, there is no published academic work, in any language, comparing in depth Moroccan workers' mobilisations and trade unionism with those of Tunisia (or any other North African country).[26]

This thesis, then, builds on the aforementioned class-based works on labour in the 2011 uprisings, but it also expands upon their contributions by bringing Morocco into the comparison. Moreover, this thesis is original in that the authors cited above seem to use a relatively narrow notion of working class and class struggle, centred on manual waged workers mobilising in the workplace or within a trade union framework. This lens is particularly problematic for the Moroccan and Tunisian cases, in which the first-movers of the uprisings were "unemployed" or precarious youths, high school students, and "middle class" activists.[27] As the next section shows, this

[26] The exception is Feltrin 2018a, which is based on materials from this thesis.
[27] As Chapter 2 will clarify, the autonomist-inspired, broad notions of working class and class struggle deployed in this thesis make the question of whether workers' mobilisations were significant or not in

thesis's heterodox approach to class analysis has not yet been applied to the study of workers and trade unions in North Africa.

1.3 The North African Working Class: Precarious versus Secure Workers

This section reviews different conceptions of "working class" in the academic literature on North African workers, highlighting the question of the relation between precarious and secure workers. The most widely recognised authors who have researched the topic, Pierre Bourdieu and Frantz Fanon, debated the issue in the form of a quest for an economically-determined "revolutionary subject", which was arguably fruitless.[28] While the two reached opposite conclusions on the revolutionary subject, they agreed that secure and precarious workers constitute two different social classes, which they called the proletariat and the sub-proletariat (Bourdieu) or lumpenproletariat (Fanon). The subsequent literature on North African workers has mostly accepted this orthodox dissection, or avoided challenging it.

Pierre Bourdieu's *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Bourdieu *et al.* 1963) and Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (Fanon 2002) – translated into English as *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 2004) – became classics of social thought, influencing debates on class and social change on a global level. Both Bourdieu and Fanon wrote on the role of workers in the Algerian War for Independence. They investigated the same empirical events and there are many points of agreement in their class analysis of Algeria: the national bourgeoisie is weak and non-hegemonic, the post-colonial state will have a preponderant role in compensating for this weakness, and labour markets are strongly segmented because of the uneven nature of dependent capitalist development, which creates deep divisions among the workers.[29] However, despite these affinities, Bourdieu came to the conclusion that the proletariat is the only viable revolutionary subject, while Fanon found it in the lumpenproletariat.

The young Bourdieu's analysis of the Algerian workers is credited as the very first deployment of the theme "*précarité*" in the sociology of work (Bourdieu *et al.*

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the 2011 Arab uprisings scarcely relevant, as the positive answer becomes self-evident. Therefore, the thesis focuses more specifically on working-class power – as an outcome of former class struggles – as an important factor contributing to shape the outcomes of the uprisings.

[28] From an empirical standpoint, both secure and precarious workers have been at the forefront of mobilisations for social change at different times and places. Patterns of subjectivity construction and concrete mobilisations depend on a host of contextual factors that must be discerned through multiple levels of analysis, and cannot simply be derived from the position of a working-class fraction in the economic system.

[29] These observations also apply to colonised Morocco and Tunisia.

1963, p. 353). Bourdieu, through his own variety of modernisation theory (see Burawoy and Von Holdt 2012, p. 75), described how the processes of dispossession, proletarianisation, and monetisation set in motion by colonialism had unleashed the forces of the market on the Algerian working class in formation (see also Lazreg 1976).

While part of the dispossessed peasantry found relatively secure employment in the modern sector, the rest became a precarious mass of landless rural dwellers or lumpen urbanites of rural origin. The enclave economy typical of colonialism, with islands of highly productive workplaces in a sea of "underdevelopment", had led to a dual labour market in which: "[W]orkers are sharply divided in two groups, those who are stable, and are then extremely so, and those who are unstable, and are then extremely so"[30] (Bourdieu *et al.* 1963, p. 361). Bourdieu makes it clear that, in his class grid, the sub-proletariat and the proletariat are two different social classes (*Ibid.*, pp. 382-9).

Bourdieu notes that precarity in employment is characterised by an experience of arbitrariness, disorganisation, incoherence, anxiety, lack of dignity, demoralisation, and loss of reference points (*Ibid.*, pp. 352-61). The existential insecurity associated with precarity makes it impossible to project into the future a rational, measured, and calculated life-plan. The precarious are thus imprisoned in "presentness", and this discontinuous, non-linear relation to time prevents them from participating in a political project for systemic social change: "The sub-proletarian *is* consciousness of unemployment; the proletarian *has* consciousness of unemployment" (*Ibid.*, p. 311).[31] The mobilisations of the precarious are thus limited to spontaneous outbursts of frustration, which Bourdieu saw – through his modernisation theory lens – as "messianic", dreamlike, and devoid of revolutionary consciousness (*Ibid.*, p. 309).

The opposite applies to the proletarians (*Ibid.*, pp. 361-75). In an explicit criticism of Fanon, Bourdieu wrote:

> [T]wo attitudes correspond to two types of material conditions of existence: on one side, the sub-proletarians of the cities and the uprooted peasants whose existence is reduced to fatality and arbitrariness, on the

[30] Translated from French by the author.
[31] Translated from French by the author.

> other side, the stable workers in the modern sector, equipped with the security and the guarantees that allow the setting of aspirations and opinions into a rational perspective. The disorganisation of daily life impedes the formation of the system of projects and rational foresights of which revolutionary consciousness is an aspect. […] This is why doubt must be cast on the thesis according to which, in the colonised countries, the proletariat is not a true revolutionary force under the pretext that, differently from the peasant masses, it has everything to lose because of its position as an irreplaceable cog of the colonial machine. […] Paradoxically, this privilege is the condition for the appearance of a truly rational revolutionary consciousness.[32] (*Ibid.*, p. 312)

Thus, starting from a non-Marxist theoretical standpoint, Bourdieu reached the traditional Marxist conclusion that workers in the most advanced sectors of the economy are the privileged – in the double sense of most resourceful and most effective – makers of systemic social change. Paradoxically, from a "slightly stretched" (Fanon 2004, p. 5) Marxist perspective, Fanon arrived at the opposite conclusion.

The Wretched of the Earth analyses decolonisation struggles in the whole Global South, but Fanon's standpoint was Algeria during the War for Independence, where he had been working as a psychiatrist and militating in the National Liberation Front. The book, published shortly before Fanon's premature death, would become a paradigmatic source of inspiration and ideas for anti-imperialist movements worldwide. In Fanon's view, the waged workers of the modern urban sector are part of the social basis of the nationalist political parties as well as the backbone of the nationalist trade unions (*Ibid.*, p. 22, pp. 64-5, and pp. 74-6). However, these urban workers are integrated – even if in a subaltern position – into the colonial system and benefit to some extent from it: "[T]he proletariat in the colonies is embryonic and represents the most privileged fraction of the people" (*Ibid.*, p. 74). Proletarians, therefore, tend to have sectorial, economistic, and reformist aspirations and they are not up to the task of the revolutionary overthrow of the colonial system.

According to Fanon, the dispossessed peasantry is the only social force

[32] Translated from French by the author.

genuinely incompatible with the status quo. By this, he meant both the peasantry in the countryside and "that fraction of the peasantry blocked at the urban periphery" (*Ibid.*, pp. 80-1), i.e. the lumpenproletariat: "It is obvious that in colonial countries only the peasantry is revolutionary. It has nothing to lose and everything to gain" (*Ibid.*, p. 23, see also pp. 65-71) and "[t]he lumpenproletariat, this cohort of starving men, divorced from tribe and clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people" (*Ibid.*, p. 81).

Thus, despite their disagreement on the identity of the revolutionary subject, Bourdieu and Fanon seemed to agree on the fact that the proletariat and the lumpen/sub-proletariat constituted two separate social classes, in which only the relatively secure workers were considered as the proletariat.

More recent studies on North African workers have understandably abandoned the quest for the revolutionary subject. However, the orthodox assumption that the "lumpenproletariat" – e.g. unwaged informal-sector workers and the "unemployed" – is external to the working class has been reformulated in new ways (e.g. Beinin and Lockman 1988) or simply gone unchallenged (e.g. Bayat 2013).

Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman's masterpiece *Workers on the Nile* (1988) is centred on urban waged workers in large modern enterprises because "in the course of the period covered by this study, they became the best organized, most politically conscious workers, and came to constitute the active core of the working class. This justifies our focusing on them." (Beinin and Lockman 1988, p. 5). The authors show how the making of the Egyptian working class in the context of the struggle for national independence facilitated its integration into the Nasserist regime. The important role of the Egyptian labour movement in the national liberation struggle forced the post-colonial regime to address its demands, but it also enhanced the penetration of nationalist ideology in the workers' movement. This was instrumental in legitimising its loss of autonomy to a corporatist arrangement which denied the existence of class conflict (see also Beinin 1989).[33]

Beinin and Lockman recognise that urban workers in large and modern

[33] Other academic works on relatively secure workers in Egypt are Ellis Goldberg's social history of industrial workers before the Free Officers' coup (Goldberg 1986), Marie Duboc and Samer Shehata's ethnographies of public sector textile workers (Duboc 2012; 2013; Shehata 2009), and Dina Ebeid's ethnography of Helwan's metal workers (Ebeid 2012). In Tunisia, Salah Hamzaoui wrote his PhD thesis on the Gafsa miners (Hamzaoui 1970, in French). In Algeria, Ben Bella's post-independence experiments with workers' self-management attracted the attention of multiple researchers (e.g. Clegg 1971; and, in French, Laks 1970; Mahsas 1975).

enterprises did "not constitute the whole of the Egyptian working class" (*Ibidem*), and they also include within the working class "[t]hose craftsmen who owned some means of production but were in fact completely dependent on merchants and factory owners" (*Ibidem*). However, they used an E. P. Thompson-inspired notion of working class (see Thompson 1963) which conflates the concepts of class and class consciousness, thus including in the working class only those who subjectively share an identity as workers. This excludes – as they make clear – "landless agricultural wage workers" (*Ibidem*) but also those engaged in intellectual work and much unwaged work, including housework and informal work in services. Both authors have later broadened the scope of their research to less secure workers (see Beinin 2001; Lockman 1994), but they seem to have maintained the theoretical position that workers are only those who understand themselves as such and act accordingly.[34]

If Beinin and Lockman focused on relatively secure workers, Asef Bayat dealt extensively with precarious workers in the MENA (including Egypt), particularly in his book *Life as Politics* (Bayat 2013).[35] Here, Bayat shows how groups that are normally thought to be powerless to advance their interests – including the urban poor in authoritarian contexts – can in fact do so through "social nonmovements" and "the quiet encroachment of the ordinary":

> [S]hared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations. […] [T]he "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" encapsulates the discreet and prolonged ways in which the poor struggle to survive and to better their lives by quietly impinging on the propertied

[34] Arguably, this position has unintentional but thorny political implications, in that it shores up those right-wing narratives according to which the working class does not exist anymore due to "declining class consciousness" among working people.

[35] Other publications on North African precarious workers include John Chalcraft's social history of small-enterprise and service workers in late 19th century and early 20th century Egypt (Chalcraft 2005), Habib Ayeb, Ray Bush, and their associates' volume on marginality in Egypt (Ayeb and Bush 2012), Koenraad Bogaert and Soraya El Kahlaoui's works on the Moroccan marginalised from a "spatial" perspective (Bogaert 2011; 2015; 2018; in English – El Kahlaoui 2017 – in French), and Montserrat Emperador's works on the Moroccan unemployed movement (Emperador 2007; 2009; in French). The importance of precarious workers in the 2011 uprisings, especially in Tunisia, has prompted a new wave of academic works on the precarious and their mobilisations (Bayat 2015; Feltrin 2018b; Hamdi and Weipert-Fenner 2017; – in English –; Belhadj and De Facci 2015; Bono *et al.* 2015; Emperador 2011; Meddeb 2011; – in French –; Pontiggia 2017; – in Italian).

and powerful, and on society at large. (*Ibid.*, p. 15)

Through everyday, direct, contentious action, the urban poor occupy land and buildings to inhabit, take over public spaces to carry out the activities on which they rely for an income, and illegally acquire utilities and other services. These ordinary practices are carried out by large numbers of people, but they remain fragmented and scarcely organised through communal "passive networks" (*Ibid.*, p. 23). Nonmovements are a vehicle to defend the interests of the poor who cannot organise themselves through traditional trade unions due to their volatile employment conditions (*Ibid.*, p. 84). They can also coalesce into full-fledged social movements if they fall under a common threat or if the opportunity to turn encroachment into right otherwise arises, which is what happened during the 2011 uprisings (*Ibid.*, p. 315).
When he examines different perspectives on the urban poor, Bayat aptly notes that "Marx theorized them [the "lumpenproletarians"] later [in *Capital*] in terms of the 'reserve army of labor,' and thus a segment of the working class" (*Ibid.*, p. 36). However, he does not take a clear position in this debate, as demonstrated by his quite loose deployment of the term "class".

Another body of literature concerns a group of workers in an intermediate position within the precarious-secure spectrum.[36] The labour law reforms that accompanied neoliberal structural adjustment liberalised precarious employment in the formal sector to attract foreign investment and boost the international competitiveness of manufacturing. This generated a new layer of workers, mostly women, employed in private sector light manufacturing for export. Working conditions here are usually more secure when compared to the informal sector, but short-term contracts, low skills, sexism, violations of the labour legislation, and a business strategy centred on cheap labour ensure that these workers still face extremely precarious conditions relative to the public sector or to most heavy industry. Such employment trends resulted in the emergence of a literature on these relatively precarious industrial workers.[37] However, to the author's knowledge, this literature

[36] The distinction between precarious and secure workers, in fact, should be understood not as sociologically clear-cut but as an analytical tool useful to make sense of a highly diverse and interpenetrating continuum.
[37] Cairoli 2011; Debuysere 2018; Moghadam 1998; – in English – Barrières 2018; Bouasria 2013; El Aoufi 2000; – in French – Gondino 2015; Turco 2014 – in Italian. The rise of agribusiness, especially in Morocco, has also opened the way for relatively precarious feminised employment in formal sector agriculture (Moreno Nieto 2016).

has not explicitly challenged the conception of the working class based on waged work.

This section has shown that the distinction between precarious and secure workers as poles of a highly diverse continuum remains a meaningful entry point for class analysis in North Africa. However, the authors who have thus far researched the subject have either understood the two categories of workers as separate social classes – Bourdieu and Fanon in an "orthodox", "objective" way, and Beinin and Lockman in a more sophisticated, "consciousness-informed" manner – or chose not to address this question explicitly. As Chapter 2 will clarify, this thesis prefers a heterodox solution, which understands all kinds of precarious and secure workers as part of a broadly conceived working class. In fact, one of the claims of this thesis is that, to fully understand the role of labour organisations in the 2011 uprisings, it is necessary to take into account the pressures placed by precarious workers on the trade unions.

Conclusion

This chapter has first evaluated the capacity of the pre-2011 literature to understand the role of the unions in the 2011 uprisings, arguing that "class-based" approaches are more adequate than "institution-based" approaches. In fact, the latter proved to be excessively optimistic concerning "union-pluralist" Morocco and overly pessimistic about single-trade union Tunisia. The working class cannot be, even heuristically, reduced to its official organisations, which mediate between workers and the state and are subject to pressures coming from both sides.

However, no post-2011 research has compared union-pluralist Morocco with Tunisia or with any other single-trade union regime, therefore the puzzle of why the role of the unions in the 2011 uprisings did not match the expectations of institution-based approaches is left unaddressed, and with it the parallel question of the relative importance of institutions versus the balance of class power.

Moreover, no post-2011 study has challenged the long prevailing, narrow notions of working class, centred on manual waged work. In order to interpret more effectively the 2011 Arab uprisings in class terms, a broader conception of class is necessary, which is able to account for the relations not only between the unions as organisations and their potential recruitment pool of relatively secure workers, but also between the unions and the non-unionised precarious workers.

By positioning itself in such a way within the existing literature, the thesis builds an innovative approach to the study of trade unions in the region (see Chapter 2), revealing the advantages of such a perspective in addressing the puzzle identified in the first section of this chapter:

Why did the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions have a divergent role in the 2011 Arab uprisings and their outcomes?

In light of the debates analysed in the literature review, two sub-questions can also be posed:

1) What was the respective significance of labour institutions and of the balance of class power in contributing to shape how the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions acted in the 2011 Arab uprisings?

2) How can we conceptualise the ways in which precarious and secure workers in Morocco and Tunisia mobilised and interacted during the 2011 Arab uprisings and their influence on the trade unions in this context?

The answers to these questions cannot be found in the existing academic literature. On the one hand, empirical work on Moroccan labour is extremely scant. On the other hand, and more importantly, the thesis will address these questions through an original approach, focusing on the constituent power of class struggles in history and deploying a heterodox notion of class well suited to grasp important aspects of the mobilisations under study.

Chapter 2 – Theory and Methods: Studying Workers, Trade Unions and the State

Introduction

This chapter expounds the theoretical approach adopted by the thesis to tackle the questions of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions' role in the 2011 Arab uprisings, the respective significance of labour institutions and the balance of class power, and the relations between precarious workers, secure workers, and the trade unions. To answer such questions, this research deploys a historical sociological approach that is centred on autonomist Marxism and which critically incorporates some elements of historical institutionalism. The chapter concludes with an exposition of the research methods and the data sources used.

For the purposes of this thesis, three key themes of autonomist Marxism will be explored: an expanded conception of the working-class composition, a theoretical distinction between workers and their official organisations, and a struggle-centred approach to understanding working-class power as a vector of social change.

The advantage of autonomist Marxism is that, with its emphasis on class struggle as a form of collective agency, it constitutes a theoretical alternative to more economic deterministic versions of Marxism (see Cleaver 1992), while at the same time maintaining a systemic understanding of such struggles as taking place "in and against capital". With Mario Tronti's "Copernican inversion", the focus of analysis shifted from the structures of capital's "objective laws" to the agency of subjective class struggles (Tronti 1966). Autonomist Marxism thus saw capital as an antagonistic social relation including the working class within it and changing as a result of struggles from below. Therefore, attention turned to class struggle, and later on other forms of social struggle, as an "independent variable" able to transform the structures of society in unpredictable ways. While class struggle is far from the only type of social conflict relevant to social change,[38] it is the most important one when analysing

[38] Because this research does not establish a hierarchy between class struggle and other emancipatory struggles, Marxism is considered here not as an exhaustive worldview able to make sense of all aspects of society, but as a body of theory useful to understand issues relating to class and capitalism, which

the three themes on which this thesis focuses. Working-class compositions, systems of labour institutions and levels of working-class power, therefore, are seen here as outcomes of past contingent struggles rather than as manifestations of necessary economic laws.

By stressing contingent struggles, this approach counterbalances the focus on the weight of institutional arrangements that has characterised several works on North African labour (see Chapter 1). As labour institutions are constituted by former class struggles and grounded in specific balances of class power, they can be unsettled and transformed in unforeseeable ways by workers' initiatives. Furthermore, autonomist Marxism's expanded notion of the working class allows scholars to conceptualise the community mobilisations of precarious workers (including unwaged workers) as class struggle, and to innovatively thematise the relations between precarious workers and the trade unions as part of dynamics internal to the whole working-class composition.

2.1 Autonomist Marxism and Class Composition Analysis

This section starts by outlining the concepts developed by autonomist Marxism that are most useful for this thesis. It then explains the conception of class adopted here, focusing on the inclusion of unwaged workers in the working-class composition and on the distinction between precarious and secure workers as a salient characteristic of the technical composition of the working class.

Autonomist Marxism, as defined by Harry Cleaver, underlines the role of class struggle in unsettling and transforming social structures, including labour institutions:

> What gives meaning to the concept of "autonomist Marxism" as a particular tradition is the fact that we can identify, within the larger Marxist tradition, a variety of movements, politics and thinkers who have emphasized the autonomous power of workers – autonomous from capital, from their official organizations (e.g. the trade unions, the political parties) and, indeed, the power of particular groups of workers to act autonomously from other groups (e.g. women from men). By "autonomy" I mean the ability of workers to define their own interests

needs to be combined with other bodies of critical theory to understand other forms of social domination – e.g. feminism to understand issues relating to gender and patriarchy.

> and to struggle for them – to go beyond mere reaction to exploitation, or to self-defined "leadership" and to take the offensive in ways that shape the class struggle and define the future. (De Angelis 1993)

Autonomist Marxism thus defined is a broad tradition with several sub-currents as divergent as, for example, Italian *operaismo* ("workerism") and British Open Marxism,[39] with different – often mutually incompatible – positions. This thesis privileges the minor and interrelated strands constituted by American autonomism (see Caffentzis 2013; Cleaver 2017) and autonomist feminism (see Federici 2012; Weeks 2011) rather than the more well-known *post-operaismo* predicated on the thesis of the hegemony of cognitive labour as popularised by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (see Hardt and Negri 2000).

The autonomist Marxist class composition approach emerged in 1960s Italy with the journals *Quaderni Rossi* (1961-1966) and *Classe Operaia* (1964-1967), animated by intellectuals like Raniero Panzieri, Romano Alquati, and Mario Tronti, in rupture with the leadership of the USSR-aligned Italian Communist Party (see Wright 2002). Due to the fact that these intellectuals emphasised rank-and-file workers' initiatives *vis-à-vis* party and trade union hierarchies, they came to be known as *operaisti* ("workerists").

In order to assess the emancipatory potential of workers' struggles, the *operaisti* studied historic-specific technical and political compositions of the working class (see Alquati 1975). The *technical composition* refers to workers as organised, segmented, and stratified – that is divided – by capital as labour power, through different economic sectors, labour processes, wage hierarchies, etc. The feminist and American strands of autonomism would then push the analysis further, showing how these divisions are deepened through the subsumption by the capitalist organisation of society of gendered and racial forms of oppression (James 2012). The *political composition*, instead, indicates the extent to which workers as a class overcome, or not, their divisions, so that they can resist and attack capitalist commodification and exploitation, i.e. their forms of consciousness, struggle, and organisation. These forms

[39] Open Marxism is normally considered as separated from autonomism, despite the intersections between the two traditions. It is considered here as part of autonomism by virtue of Cleaver's broad definition.

of struggle range from overt and self-conscious militancy – strikes, political campaigns, mass demonstrations, etc. – to covert and non-politicised everyday acts of resistance – absenteeism, pilfering, "laziness", etc. While the technical composition provides the material bases on which the political composition stands, there is no mechanical determination from the former to the latter – workers' agency is the element of contingency between the two.

Capital needs to constantly transform through technological and organisational innovations to contain working-class struggles, and in doing so it transforms the working class in turn. A *cycle of struggle* is the process of class composition, de-composition, and re-composition by which capitalist restructurings are pushed through (Dyer-Witherford 1999, pp. 131-8).[40] In its constant quest to reproduce itself, capital displays a tendency to subsume society as a whole into the *social factory* (Tronti 1966), although this pressure to subordinate all social spheres to the imperatives of commodity production is always met with open or covert resistance. The insight that all aspects of society tend to be – successfully or not – integrated into the circuits of capital accumulation takes the autonomist conception of class struggle well beyond the immediate point of production in manufacturing. All social domains affected by capital's subsumption drives thus become terrains of class struggle.

The social factory idea went hand in hand with a criticism of the hierarchy, set up by Leninism, between secondary economic demands (arising spontaneously from workers' particular mobilisations) and primary political demands (conforming to the general strategy brought by the vanguard party from outside of the working-class composition). As the logic of capital accumulation expands beyond the factory walls, it becomes evident how the economic aspects of capitalism are closely intertwined with the political ones. The successful *circulation of struggles* – even those carrying only basic economic demands – through different groups of workers creates so many obstacles to the smooth reproduction of capitalism, resulting in recurrent systemic crises that take on a general and political character (see Tronti 1966, pp. 60-85).[41] As

[40] In Morocco and Tunisia's recent history, it is possible to identify three major cycles of struggle linked to historic-specific working-class compositions: the national liberation movement of the 1940s and 1950s (which falls outside of the domain of this thesis), the strike wave of the 1970s and 1980s, and the mobilisations for social justice and democracy of the 2000s and 2010s.

[41] This emphasis on working-class self-activity does not mean that political organisation is irrelevant for the outcome of such struggles, but it does mean that an organisation that is not "internal" to the working-class composition (i.e. rooted in the rank-and-file self-organisation of the mobilised segments of the class) is condemned to remain isolated or to found a new kind of oppressive system. This is why

John Holloway put it: “Crisis is quite simply the manifestation of the fact that the screw [of capital] is not being tightened fast enough. Somewhere it is meeting resistance” (Holloway 2010).

Autonomist feminists like Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James adapted the social factory concept to the analysis of *unwaged*, *reproductive labour* (Dalla Costa and James 1972). As Silvia Federici – another prominent autonomist feminist – writes:

> Tronti referred here to the increasing reorganization of the “territory” as a social space structured in view of the needs of factory production and capitalist accumulation. But to us, it was immediately clear that the circuit of capitalist production, and the “social factory” it produced, began and was centered above all in the kitchen, the bedroom, the home – insofar as these were the centers for the production of labor-power. (Federici 2011, pp. 7-8)

Autonomist feminists held that housewives are also part of the capital-labour relation because they perform unwaged work producing and reproducing the peculiar commodity that is labour power. Initially in the context of American autonomism, which developed from the 1970s onwards around the journals *Zerowork* and *Midnight Notes* (see Midnight Notes Collective 1992), the autonomist feminists’ insights on unwaged housework were applied to other categories of precarious workers, such as peasants in the Global South (Cleaver 1976), self-employed intellectual workers in the Global North (Bologna 2018), or artisans, indentured servants, and slaves in the North and South (Van Der Linden 2008). The perspective of the autonomist feminists, therefore, does not apply to female workers only but to the capital-labour relation in general, and this is the way in which it is used here. As Harry Cleaver summarises: “[T]he wage divides the class hierarchically into wage […] and unwaged […] sectors, such that the latter groups appear to be outside the working class simply because they are not paid a wage” (Cleaver 1979, p. 72).

Building upon this theoretical infrastructure, this thesis departs from the orthodox conceptions that – like the ones presented in Chapter 1 – understand the

organisational forms need to change according to the context constituted by the working-class composition in which they operate.

"lumpenproletariat" as a social class separate from the working class. Marx himself abandoned this view in his mature writings. In fact, the "scum of all classes" of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx 1996, p. 78) reappears in *Capital* as the "reserve army of labour" (Marx 1992, pp. 781-801), and thus as a fraction of the working class.

The working class is here defined by dispossession rather than by exploitation. Dispossession from *significant* ownership and control of the means of production[42] generalises the dependence on the sale of labour power for access to income.[43] This dependence on commodified work is the key mechanism of capitalist social control (see Cleaver 2017). The precarious too are part of the working-class composition because they are forced to sell – directly or indirectly – their labour power to capital, even if there is nobody to buy it enduringly.

This broad conception of working class includes both waged and unwaged workers, even those unwaged who own some means of production but are in fact subordinated to the controllers of significant magnitudes of capital. As Michael Heinrich writes:

> The question of who belongs to what class in a structural sense also cannot be determined according to formal properties […]. [M]any formally self-employed people (who might even own some small means of production) are still proletarians, who live *de facto* from the sale of their labor-power, except that this happens under potentially worse conditions than under a formal wage relationship. (Heinrich 2012, p. 193)

The members of the so-called "middle class", performing mainly intellectual labour, are also considered here as part of a broadly conceived working class if they are dispossessed of significant ownership and control of capital. Conversely, managers who are formally waged employees but control significant magnitudes of capital, are considered as part of the capitalist class:

[42] The threshold of "significant" is, of course, virtually impossible to establish in a clear-cut way, leaving space for a wide "grey area" in which the class relationship cuts across single individuals, but quantitative accounting is not a concern here.

[43] As Simon Clarke wrote, "all of the dispossessed are potential wage-labourers for capital, and in that sense are members of the working class whose existence presupposes and is presupposed by its opposition to capital" (Clarke 2002, p. 56).

> The chairman of the board of a corporation might formally be a wage-laborer, but in fact he is a "functioning capitalist": he disposes of capital (even if it is not his personal property), organizes exploitation, and his "payment" is not based upon the value of his labor-power, but on the profit produced. (*Ibidem*)

In line with the approach outlined above, class struggle is a much broader phenomenon than class-conscious manual workers' collective mobilisations in the workplace. It refers to all contentious action – individual or collective, within or beyond the workplace, class-conscious or not – by people dispossessed of significant ownership and control of capital to assert their class interests *vis-à-vis* those owning or controlling significant magnitudes of capital.[44] Different from traditional Marxism, the notion of "class interest" is not treated here as "objective",[45] but as depending to a large extent on one's political evaluations.[46] Dispossession from the means of production points to a potential common interest in democratising their ownership and management. The fact that individual workers will appreciably act upon such common interest is far from granted,[47] but it is a constant possibility.

The precarious-secure division, like the unwaged-waged division, is an aspect of the working-class technical composition that tends to weaken the potential for workers to re-compose politically against capital. Precarity, informality, and the lack of a wage are mutually reinforcing phenomena, but they should not be confused. Precarity refers to insecure employment – waged or unwaged, formal or informal – incapable of providing a regular income; it exists in agriculture, industry, and the service sector. The trade unions most often organise secure waged workers (both

[44] This does not mean that capitalists cannot join workers in their class struggles – Friedrich Engels was a fine example of this – it rather means that, to the extent that they do so, they are not acting in their own class interest.

[45] The notion of the "objectivity" of class interests provided the ideological justification for a wide range of authoritarian practices by communist parties worldwide. Conversely, the recognition that a certain definition of class interest is to some extent constructed demotes it from the status of an authoritative truth to that of a political proposition to be promoted by democratic means.

[46] The demands for social justice and democracy expressed during the 2011 Arab uprisings are treated here as being in the interest of the working class because they point towards increased workers' control over access to resources and over the state.

[47] This is indeed the point of the distinction between technical working-class composition and political working-class composition.

manual and intellectual) because the employment conditions of precarious workers usually make it hard for them to unionise.[48]

Due to automation in agriculture and manufacturing, in many Global South countries that have never reached levels of industrialisation comparable to the West, workers are being thrown directly from agricultural employment into the tertiary sector (see Benanav 2015a; 2015b). For the vast majority of them, this does not mean a highly paid job in finance or creative work in the media industry, but insecure toil in low-end services, often informal and/or self-employed. In the same way that automation augments the productivity of those workers who remain in core production, it makes an increasing proportion of workers relatively less necessary to it. This is Marx's reserve army of labour or surplus population (Marx 1992, pp. 781-801; see also Benanav and Clegg 2010).

In countries such as Morocco and Tunisia, where there are no adequate unemployment subsidies, the surplus population must still work to gain access to the means of mere survival. "Unemployment" is often a cultural construct, signifying that somebody is not engaged in the kind of work to which she feels entitled by prevailing social norms that result from previous struggles (Feltrin 2018b). The category "unemployed" is therefore misleading, in that it is generally used in these contexts to refer to people who perform a wide variety of casual work.[49] This is why this thesis uses the label "precarious workers" to designate most members of the surplus population.

Precarious workers impose latent or active pressures on relatively secure workers, eroding their bargaining power and thus blurring the sociological frontier between the precarious and secure workforce. Precarity and security, then, are best seen as two poles of an interpenetrating continuum. Precarity spreads across sectors and subjects, undermining or weakening the forms of consciousness and organisation that characterised the age of expanding industrial employment.

Of course, rising precarity is not a deterministic "law" any more than rising automation. Indeed, in the post-World War II period many countries – including Tunisia – saw the advent of a social pact providing sources of regular income for expanding sections of the population. This period, however, can be regarded as

[48] This is certainly true for Moroccan and Tunisian precarious workers.

[49] This is also why unemployment statistics for countries without unemployment subsidies are virtually useless for the purposes of this thesis.

exceptional in the history of capitalism and dependent on a series of specific conditions. Since the 1970s, the social pact has continuously deteriorated, and no inversion of this tendency is in sight. However, as Cleaver noted, extremely widespread precarity can become a problem for capital, as the lack of work takes away the main capitalist instrument of social control (Cleaver 2017, pp. 92-5).

This framework of class analysis is more effective in studying North African class compositions compared to narrower approaches that define the working class by waged labour or, even worse, industrial manufacturing. As seen above, the unevenness of dependent capitalist development has led to trajectories of class composition and re-composition that are markedly different from the West, where a central role has been played by private sector manufacturing bourgeoisie and labourers (see Ayubi 1995, pp. 174-82). While private factory owners and workers obviously exist in North Africa and have at times had a significant role in producing social change, these countries have historically featured relatively large informal sectors, on the one hand, and sizeable public sectors, on the other.[50] The existence of large informal sectors means that a significant proportion of workers undertake extremely precarious employment (often unwaged). Sizeable public sectors, on the other hand, mean that both non-propertied managers and intellectual workers have been particularly important in North Africa.

As we will see, the concepts outlined above are important in the analysis of the role of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions in the 2011 Arab uprisings. In Tunisia, community struggles by precarious workers over access to employment and local development circulated across the country, taking on a political character. Through pressure from below, the UGTT leadership was pushed to call for regional general strikes, thus spreading these struggles to factories and public administration and mobilising the relatively secure workers. In Morocco, the regime consciously and quite successfully manoeuvred to fragment and de-politicise workers' protests, deepening the wedge between secure and precarious workers.

The eye-opening perspective provided by an expanded conception of working class can be illustrated by this quote from Harry Cleaver on 1960s Marxism and social movements in the United States:

[50] Although, regarding relatively large public sectors, Morocco is a notable exception.

> Baran and Sweezy, and those who followed them, still defined the working class as wage workers and thus identified the struggles of unemployed Black Panthers, militant Students for a Democratic Society, radical feminists, or welfare rights activists as being outside that class. All that could be seen of the working class within this perspective were the hard-hat attacks on anti-war demonstrators. (Cleaver 2000, p. 39)

Applying this, by way of example, to Tunisia's 2008 revolt for employment in the mining basin of Gafsa, all that could be seen of the working class from a traditional Marxist perspective were the miners and their unions scorning young unemployed demonstrators. The heterodox framework outlined in this section is an alternative to such a traditional view. It is against this conceptual background that the relations between the trade unions and the working class are interpreted.

2.2 A Non-Institutionalist Approach to Labour Institutions

This section explains how labour institutions, and trade unions in particular, are understood here as mediating instances between the working class and capital. The trade unions cannot be seen simply as the full representatives of the working class because only part of the working class is organised in trade unions, and because there are both internal and external pressures that constrain union democracy.[51] In order to distinguish different, more or less rigid, systems of labour institutions, this thesis uses as an entry point the strategies that authoritarian states can deploy to control workers and trade unions. These strategies are grouped here into three categories: substantial inducements targeting workers, organisational inducements targeting trade union officials, and constraints targeting both.

Labour institutions are seen here as systems of mediation between the working class and capital. Within a system of labour institutions, the trade unions have a particular status in that they are, at least theoretically, organisations run by representatives elected and funded directly by the workers and thus they are often crucial in advancing the interests of the latter. However, as the Zerowork Collective wrote:

[51] Representation, in any case, is always a "creative" act, as it involves the aggregation of the interests and preferences of a multiplicity of represented individuals.

> We should never identify the working class with its organizations. Indeed, much of the working class struggle producing the present crisis [the 1973 "oil crisis"] arose outside or against these very organizations. But by the same token one cannot follow the ideological line of "class purity" that analyzes struggle entirely independent of these organizations. Whether a particular organization advances the interests of the working class or not, it plays a role in the relationship between the working class and capital. (Zerowork Collective 1992, p. 112)

In all countries, only a fraction of the working class are union members. The trade unions, in the absence of pressures to defend non-members, can sometimes act to further divide the working class by augmenting the inequalities between secure unionised workers and precarious, non-unionised workers. Furthermore, as Richard Hyman has shown, union representatives at all levels must aggregate members' demands and mediate them with external pressures coming from capital and the state, as well as internal pressures stemming from the trade union hierarchy itself (Hyman 1975; 1979).

Internal pressures against union democracy have been captured by Robert Michels' classic concept of the "iron law of oligarchy" (Michels 1999), although he arguably overstated its rigidity. Control over a large, hierarchical, and centralised organisation allows the trade union leaders to exercise a degree of undemocratic control over their members, even if free and fair internal elections periodically take place (and much more so when they do not take place).

Some Marxist theorists have identified the main cleavage within the trade unions as between members depending for their income on extra-union jobs versus full-time trade union officials; the latter constitute the "trade union bureaucracy"[52] and feature a structural tendency to compromise with capital (Darlington and Upchurch 2011). This thesis acknowledges the fact that full-time officials – because they depend on the organisational viability of the trade union for their income and social standing – tend to be more vulnerable to undemocratic pressures compared to other union members. However, this factor by itself is not sufficient for understanding the behaviour of union

[52] We will see that the notion of "trade union bureaucracy" is very common among the union Left of Morocco and Tunisia. However, the union militants normally use it to identify opportunistic trade unionists regardless of whether they work full-time for the union or not.

officials and members. Non-full-time union representatives, for example, are far from immune to undemocratic temptations, as the empirical materials collected in this thesis confirm.

Therefore, David Camfield's alternative understanding of bureaucracy as a social relation in which internal democracy is limited through formal rules (Camfield 2013) is preferred here. Bureaucratic practices, however, are not the only way to limit internal democracy; a common alternative are informal patrimonial practices through which trade unionists can exercise undemocratic control over the organisation by the very violation of formal rules. According to this conception, both bureaucratic and patrimonial practices can be found all across the trade union hierarchy, although they obviously have more important consequences when deployed at the top.

External undemocratic pressures, as opposed to internal ones, refer to the interest of the state and capital in using the trade union hierarchy as a means to control the workers. As Hyman put it:

> [U]nions can readily be transformed, at least partially, into an agency of control *over* their members to the advantage of external interests (that is, the power *over* the membership which is the prerequisite of concerted action is divorced from its explicit purpose as a means of control *for* these same members). […] Trade unions, as organisations of the relatively powerless in an environment of power, can achieve any meaningful internal democracy only against external resistance and considerable odds. For this very reason, the role of trade unionism as a medium of control over work relations is inherently ambiguous. (Hyman 1975, p. 68, italics in the original)

In this struggle for control of the trade union organisation, the capitalist state cannot be seen as a neutral arbiter between workers and capital because its material reproduction relies on the well-being of capitalist accumulation, on which the state is dependent for its revenue (see Clarke 1991).

Trade unions, then, are perpetually subject to a struggle for control in which the internal promoters of bureaucratic and patrimonial practices and the external influences of capital and the state combine into constant pressures to use workers' organisations for aims that might diverge significantly from the interests or

preferences of most rank-and-file members. This is why the working class (or even the unionised working class) cannot, again, be reduced to the trade unions, and vice versa. This reasoning is even more crucial in the case of authoritarian countries, where undemocratic tendencies within the trade unions are usually directly supported by severe state repression.

Labour-state relations, then, cannot be reduced to trade unions-state relations, assuming that unions can be treated as proxies for the working class. Labour institutions are systems of institutionalised relations between workers, the trade unions, the state, and capital, which emerge as outcomes of class struggles and can be further modified by successive rounds of struggle.

Once a configuration of labour institutions is in place, further conflicts are themselves mediated through it, and this has important effects on the concrete forms of change. Change and continuity are always coexistent, but the "amalgam" between the two varies, with more change in times of crisis and more continuity in times of stability. Agency and struggles have a role to play in periods of stability too (Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

Fundamental change in labour institutions and in the political regimes of which they are part can happen through paths of "breakdown and replacement" or "gradual transformation" (Streeck and Thelen 2005). In the face of shifts in the balance of class power and pressures towards institutional change coming from below, flexible political institutions – featuring built-in mechanisms to assess the power and discontent of the subordinates – are more likely to accommodate change in a gradual and negotiated way, while rigid political institutions – dealing with the power and discontent of the subordinates in a systematically repressive way – will more probably change in an abrupt and insurrectional manner.[53]

A common system of labour institutions in authoritarian regimes is "authoritarian corporatism". Philippe Schmitter's path-breaking article describes corporatism as follows:

> Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular,

[53] This thesis holds that this was the case, respectively, of Morocco and Tunisia in the 2011 uprisings and their aftermath.

> compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support.[54] (Schmitter 1974, pp.93-4)

Authoritarian corporatism has been widespread among late industrialising countries because of the important role of the state in attempts at catch-up development (O'Donnell 1977). As Arab Marxists like Samir Amin and Nazih Ayubi have emphasised, North Africa was no exception (Amin 1976; Ayubi 1995).

David and Ruth Collier, in their work on authoritarian corporatism, noted that "[c]orporative provisions have been used in some cases to strengthen the position of workers and unions in relation to employers, whereas in others they have been used to weaken their position" (Collier and Collier 1979, p. 968). In order to distinguish between the two cases, they refined the conceptualisation of authoritarian labour institutions with a typology based on the levels of *inducements* and *constraints* deployed by the state to control labour. However, the two authors think about inducements exclusively in the sense of "advantages upon the *labor organizations* that receive them" (*Ibid.*, p. 969, italics added). Yet "organisational inducements", as Collier and Collier recognise (*Ibid.,* p. 980), are in the interest of the trade union officials but not in themselves directly advantageous to workers. An exclusive focus on organisational inducements does not grasp the possible divergences of interests between trade union officials and rank-and-file workers.

This thesis builds upon Collier and Collier's analysis of labour institutions based on organisational inducements and constraints, but it also adds "substantial inducements", i.e. inducements that benefit the workers directly. The distinction between substantial and organisational inducements is crucial because it is an instrument to analyse divergences of interests within the trade unions themselves, as union action can give priority to securing substantial inducements for the workers or

[54] Schmitter then distinguishes between state (i.e. authoritarian) corporatism and societal (i.e. democratic) corporatism, depending on the extent of state control over representational organisations. Obviously, in authoritarian corporatism control over the trade unions lies further from the workers and closer to the state. Workers' compliance can therefore be maintained only through a mix of incentives and repression.

organisational inducements for the trade unionists. In this way, it is possible to avoid treating the trade union as a monolithic entity and reducing it to the actions of its top leadership. Moreover, the analysis of substantial inducements provides a window into the social bases of a regime and into the class struggles over the production and distribution of value, avoiding the formalist biases of some institution-based research (see Chapter 1). This thesis thus analyses labour institutions along three dimensions: *substantial inducements*, *organisational inducements*, and *constraints*, which authoritarian states provide to labour to secure its submission. As the empirical materials collected in the thesis confirm, these state strategies always meet some degree of resistance.

Substantial inducements – i.e. direct concessions to the workers – have contradictory effects, in that the regime grants them to secure the workers' acquiescence, but any attempts to retrench them can fuel discontent and these same inducements provide workers with the resources to act upon that discontent (see Cleaver 2000, p. 101). The substantial inducements considered here are job security provisions, wage increases, welfare services, and public sector employment.

Table 1 – Dimensions of labour institutions

Substantial inducements	**Organisational inducements**	**Constraints**
Job security	Direct advantages to trade unionists	On internal democracy
Wage increases	Trade union incorporation in policy-making	On civil and political rights
Welfare services	Monopoly of representation	On workplace org and rep
Public sector employment	State-encouraged membership	On the right to strike
	State subsidies	On collective bargaining

Organisational inducements are benefits targeting the trade union officials, who, thanks to them, gain more secure control over a more powerful organisation. The organisational inducements analysed in this thesis are direct advantages to the trade unionists, the incorporation of the trade unions in policy-making, the guarantee of monopoly of representation, state-encouraged membership, and subsidies to the unions by the state.

Constraints are sanctions upon those workers and trade union officials who, despite the respective inducements, still refuse to toe the regime's line. The constraints

studied in this research are state interference in internal democracy, limitations on civil and political rights, limitations on the rights of workplace organisation and representation, limitations on the right to strike, and limitations on collective bargaining. These are sometimes enforced through actual, legal or extra-legal, state violence.

In the post-independence phase, the labour institutions that emerged in Morocco and Tunisia differed significantly as a result of the two countries' respective divergent trajectories of struggle. To characterise these different systems of labour institutions, this thesis has developed the concepts of *authoritarian conservative pluralism* for Morocco and *authoritarian populist corporatism* for Tunisia (see Chapters 3 and 4). The North African authoritarian populist corporatist regimes (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia), under nationalist ideology, featured a state-led developmental strategy based on import-substitution industrialisation and a populist social pact between workers and capital that, *mutatis mutandis*, was the regional equivalent of post-WWII Keynesianism in the West (see Ayubi 1995). Organised labour was incorporated by these regimes through the enforcement of a single-trade union system and the interpenetration of state, single party, and single union bureaucracies. The 1960s and 1970s saw an unprecedented expansion of the industrial base of Arab populist corporatist countries and average levels of GDP per capita growth higher than those of the subsequent decades. However, already in the late 1960s, populist corporatism globally started to show signs of the crisis that would lead to rising government debt and eventually neoliberal structural adjustment (see Cleaver 1989).[55] The Arab populist regimes underwent an incremental and tentative process of erosion of substantial inducements. In the neoliberal phase, they thus became *authoritarian post-populist corporatist* systems, whereby "post-populism" indicates a partial retrenchment of the former substantial inducements to the working class (Hinnebusch 1988; 2010).

Confronted with unrest sparked by neoliberal reform, authoritarian post-populist corporatism proved to be an inherently *rigid* system of labour institutions because of its high repressiveness and because of the difficulties in retrenching former substantial inducements. The post-populist regimes, whose stability was endangered

[55] In several Latin American countries, populist corporatism was forcefully replaced by "bureaucratic authoritarianism", which – while maintaining organisational inducements – abruptly withdrew substantial inducements (O'Donnell 1977).

by neoliberal reform, were tempted to tighten the screws of corporatist control to ensure that the trade unions provided them with needed organised societal support. This made them recalcitrant to political liberalisation but wary of complete repression, and unable to channel workers' unrest into institutionalised outlets. With its stiff controls on trade unions and political parties, authoritarian corporatism tends to suppress the institutional feedback mechanisms through which workers could voice their grievances. Post-populist corporatism, therefore, was unable to adapt to the struggles sparked by neoliberalism, facilitating the emergence of "breakdown and replacement" (see Streeck and Thelen 2005) mechanisms of institutional change.

Morocco's authoritarian conservative pluralism was a unique institutional configuration in North Africa. Under a traditionalist ideology that affirmed the King's religious legitimacy, the Moroccan post-colonial regime was based upon a conservative alliance between the Palace, rural elites, peasantry under their hegemony, and urban bourgeoisie in a subordinate position. Economic policy did not signify a radical break with the colonial pattern of primary exports, substantial inducements to the working class remained limited, and repression was high. Yet the monarchy also encouraged party and union pluralism, relying on divide-and-conquer tactics to curtail the opposition. In the 1990s, the Palace engineered a partial political opening in response to continuing social unrest, easing to some extent limitations on political dissent (the socialist opposition was allowed to lead the government) and civil rights, particularly freedom of the press and freedom to protest. In this context, consultative social dialogue among the labour confederations, government, and employers' association was established. After these transformations, the Moroccan regime can be described as *semi-authoritarian conservative pluralism*.[56]

Faced with the transformations engendered by neoliberalism, semi-authoritarian conservative pluralism revealed itself to be relatively *flexible*, and thus better able to adapt. The absence of a former populist social pact made reductions in substantial inducements to the workers less drastic and probably lowered the expectations of many Moroccans (see Anderson 1991). Furthermore, trade union pluralism, party mediation between the unions and the state, and social dialogue

[56] As evident from the rest of the thesis, the use of the term "semi-authoritarian" does not mean to understate the limits on political and civil rights enforced by the regime, nor to suggest that Morocco entered a phase of "democratic transition". It merely indicates a difference of degrees in authoritarianism relative to Morocco in the post-independence phase or pre-2011 Tunisia.

provided feedback mechanisms to channel some social discontent into institutionalised outlets. This facilitated "gradual transformation" (see Streeck and Thelen 2005) patterns of institutional change.

To sum up, labour institutions mediate between the working class and capital through the interposed layers of the trade unions and the state. The entry point chosen in this thesis to analyse different systems of labour institutions are the strategies deployed by the state to attempt to control workers and trade unions. Rigid configurations of labour institutions are more likely to change in an abrupt and insurrectional manner, while flexible ones are more likely to transform in a gradual and negotiated way. Yet this says nothing of the direction and magnitude of social change in which the trade unions are involved. To investigate this, it is necessary to analyse working-class power.

2.3 Working-Class Power, Within and Without the Trade Unions

This section defines working-class power and operationalises it along the dimensions of "structural power" and "associational power", enumerating the indicators adopted to assess it. A comparison of Morocco and Tunisia on the basis of these indicators is presented in Chapter 5 (see also Feltrin 2018a).

Harry Cleaver – perhaps in exceedingly martial language – wrote:

> In the class war, as in conventional military encounters, one must begin with the closest study of one's own forces, that is, the structure of working-class power. Without an understanding of one's own power, the ebb and flow of the battle lines can appear as an endless process driven only by the enemy's unilateral self-activity. (Cleaver 2000, p. 57)

A viable way to compare levels of working-class power in Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 uprisings thus needs to be established. Erik Olin Wright defines class power in these terms: "In the context of class analysis, power can be thought of as the *capacity of individuals and organizations to realize their class interests*" (Wright 2000, p. 962; see also Silver 2003).[57] He then distinguishes between

[57] While this thesis finds the distinction between the two types of working-class power extremely useful, it does not follow Erik Olin Wright in his conception of class and the class structure (even if he does

working-class "structural power" – depending on workers' position in the economic system – and "associational power" – depending on the strength of labour organisations. In autonomist terms, while working-class structural power is directly linked to the technical composition of the class, associational power is an aspect of its political composition. This distinction is particularly useful because structural power, unlike most indicators of associational power, provides information on the potential for workers' mobilisation both within *and without* the trade unions and, as we will see, Morocco and Tunisia's uprisings featured both kinds of mobilisation.

Working-class power is seen here as arising both from "economic" factors (e.g. sectors of employment or characteristics of the labour market) and "political" factors (e.g. civil and political rights or collective bargaining institutions). Yet such factors are in turn historically constructed through successive and contingent rounds of class struggles and can change through further conflicts. In turn, a given balance of class power does not allow one to predict the results of future social conflict, it rather indicates a certain distribution of resources between classes, pointing to a range of likelier outcomes. How the relevant actors will actually mobilise such resources cannot be foreseen. This non-deterministic relation can be visualised through Bob Jessop's concept of "strategic selectivity", according to which social structures do not determine the actors' choices but merely make some strategies more feasible than others (Jessop 2008).

Table 2 – Indicators of working-class power

Working-class structural power	**Working-class associational power**
Sectorial location	Trade union density
Job security	Collective bargaining coverage
Human Development Index	Civil and political rights
Welfare services	Internal democracy

To assess working-class structural power in Morocco and Tunisia, the following indicators are singled out as the most informative, given the availability of data and the characteristics of the cases.

1) Sectorial location: this indicator refers to the distribution of employment in economic sectors that tend to provide, other things being equal, more mobilising

consider precarious workers as part of the working class, see Wright 2016), based as it is on the wage relationship and on the relegation of intellectual labour to the category of the "middle class".

potential and more advantageous conditions to the workers (e.g. manufacturing versus agriculture).

2) Job security: this indicator is heuristically measured through the share of workers with open-ended contracts and social security benefits. In both countries, open-ended contracts grant a series of legal protections against layoffs.[58]

3) The Human Development Index: the UNDP's human development indicators provide information on workers' – who, in the broad definition of this thesis, constitute the vast majority of Morocco and Tunisia's population – wealth, health, and education, and thus on the extent to which such workers are empowered to mobilise for their interests (see Cleaver 2000, p. 101). Moreover, in the absence of complete and reliable data on wages, the combination of GNI per capita and inequality indexes outlines a picture of the national distribution of income to workers. This is also consistent with the theoretical choice of including unwaged workers in the working class.

4) Welfare services: the level of public expenditure on welfare services indicates the extent to which workers are independent of the market for their education, health, and social security, and independent of charity for poverty relief. This partial decommodification, in turn, reinforces their bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the employers (see Esping-Andersen 1985).

The reader may wonder why some apparently obvious indicators, such as wage levels and unemployment rates, do not appear in the list. The problem with wages is the absence, at the time of writing, of publicly available complete data for the Moroccan private sector.[59] Comparing the legal minimum wage, or any other legal indicator, presupposes that labour legislation was equally applied in the two countries, which is very far from warranted. Unemployment rates are normally used as an indicator for the tightness or looseness of national labour markets, which in turn affects workers' bargaining power. Official unemployment rates, however, are not very meaningful in Global South countries that do not provide unemployment subsidies to their workers. In fact, the latter are forced to work regardless, no matter the availability

[58] The preciseness of this indicator is affected by the impossibility of measuring the extent of the actual application of the labour legislation. However, as labour law violations are similar or worse in Morocco relative to Tunisia, this difficulty does not invalidate the indicator.

[59] Data on public sector wages in Morocco were used to study the diachronic evolution of substantial inducements in the country, but the absence of reliable data on private sector wages there makes it unfeasible to establish a synchronic comparison of wages across sectors in Morocco and Tunisia.

of palatable employment opportunities. Unemployment rates in the Global South are often lower than in the West (Benanav 2015a, p. 21), but working-class structural power is not higher in the former. Morocco's official unemployment rate in 2010 was 9%, four percentage points lower than Tunisia's 13% (ILO), which even used a more restrictive definition of unemployment. However, these numbers have a very limited meaning, as in the same year 23.5% of the Moroccan employed population belonged to the "unpaid employed" category (HCP 2011). Surely, both Moroccan and Tunisian workers face extremely loose labour markets, marred by acute underemployment and precarity.

To assess associational power, the following indicators are used:

1) Trade union density: this is the most common indicator of trade union power. Other things being equal, trade unions with more members can stage larger and more effective mobilisations. The preciseness of this indicator is affected by the fact that trade unions can sometimes mobilise non-members too. However, as shown in the following chapters, it was in Tunisia (where trade union density was higher) that trade unionists contributed more successfully to mobilise the non-unionised.

2) Collective bargaining coverage: the extension of collective bargaining coverage reflects the trade unions' capacity to improve workers' wages and conditions through collective agreements, and it is, therefore, another classic indicator of trade union power.

3) Civil and political rights: the scope of civil rights indicates the range of contentious action to which workers and their organisations can recur without facing state repression, including the right to form new trade union confederations. The scope of political rights signals the extent to which workers can elect representatives of their choosing in state institutions.

4) Internal democracy: this is not a direct indicator of union power, but it refers to the extent to which union power is power *of* the workers, rather than just power *over* the workers (Hyman 1975). This aspect is of particular importance in authoritarian countries, where trade unions can be strictly controlled by the regime.

The reader will notice the absence of any reference to labour parties, tripartite institutions, and competitive trade unionism. In fact, these elements cannot be considered as straightforward indicators of working-class associational power, because they can act as vehicles of both empowerment and co-optation/weakening,

depending on the context. These elements will, therefore, be discussed in the following chapters, but they cannot be synthesised as univocal indicators.

Also missing is the breadth of trade union freedoms in the two countries because it is difficult to compare. Stallings (2010) used an index composed of legal provisions, on the one hand, and reports on labour law violations by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the US State Department, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), on the other. The resulting index stated that *de facto* trade union freedoms were higher in Morocco than in Tunisia. However, evidence from this thesis's interviews and archival research points in the opposite direction. For example, the author has witnessed three cases (Doha, Maghreb Steel, Med Paper; see Chapter 6) in which hundreds of striking Moroccan workers were fired for defending their trade union representatives against illegal layoffs. While anti-union discrimination in the Tunisian private sector is a very widespread phenomenon, to the author's knowledge violations on this scale are not seen there. In any case, both reports by international agencies and qualitative fieldwork are anecdotal evidence for a large-scale phenomenon and cannot be seen as conclusive.

As seen in Chapter 1, there is a strand of academic literature claiming that workers have historically tended to play an important role in democratisation processes because, *ceteris paribus*, representative democracy as opposed to authoritarianism is in the interest of the workers (see Esping-Andersen 1985; Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992; Therborn 1977). From a Marxist perspective, this does not mean that democracy in capitalism is the best possible way of organising society. However, while there is nothing democratic in the capitalist state's dependence on the production of value, civil and political rights usually allow workers to defend their interests more than the absence thereof.

This thesis argues that relatively high working-class power facilitated the UGTT's active role in Tunisia's democratisation, while lower working-class power contributed to keep most Moroccan trade unions in line with the strategy of the regime. Chapter 5 will show that, despite the gaps in the data, the overall divergence between Morocco and Tunisia on the above indicators for working-class power is significant and coherent enough to allow for solid conclusions on their different balances of class power before the uprisings.

2.4 Methodology: Historical Comparison and Data Sources

This section first justifies the comparison between the cases of Morocco and Tunisia and then specifies the data sources used to answer the research questions of the thesis. The methodology deployed here – in order to analyse the divergent role of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions in the 2011 uprisings – combines a modified version of the comparative method of difference with historical narrative (see Lange 2013).

The method of difference in its standard, so-called "Millian", version consists in comparing two similar cases featuring different outcomes. The similarities between the two cases are used to problematise rival explanations, while the differences that do exist between them point to factors that possibly contributed to divergence in their outcomes. The advantage of the method of difference is that it allows the researcher to problematise several rival explanations while at the same time producing in-depth and historically contextualised research. However, Michael Burawoy's (1989) critique of Theda Skocpol's (1979) inductive use of the Millian method is convincing: empirical differences among concrete cases are innumerable, even among most similar cases, and one cannot infer from the comparison alone which elements are the most relevant in causing the outcomes of interest. Any pretension of pure empiricism will mean that the selection of relevant explanatory factors will happen through hidden or unconscious assumptions rather than through explicit and contestable theoretical guidelines.

In this thesis, such difficulties are minimised by departing from the standard method of difference in two ways:

-Theoretical guidelines: social theories point to global trends and sets of factors that can be seen as especially relevant across multiple contexts. Therefore, they provide guidance on what factors to single out among the empirical wealth of concrete cases. This thesis focuses on how historical trajectories of class struggle contributed to shape the role of the trade unions in the uprisings because it relies on an autonomist Marxist theoretical framework that emphasises the role of struggles from below in transforming social structures.

-Historical narrative: in-depth qualitative analysis allows one to move away from explanation as a mechanical causal relation between discrete and static variables, and to bring forward the agency of social actors as an element of contingency between structural factors and the outcomes under investigation. In the case of this research,

in-depth historical narrative regarding how class struggles brought into being new configurations of labour institutions and transformed balances of class power allows one to assess the evolution of the goals, strategies, and perceived options of the relevant trade union actors.

Despite the fact that Morocco is a monarchy and Tunisia a republic, the two countries are similar in many other respects. Morocco and Tunisia are both Maghribi countries where Arab and Muslim cultures are prevalent. They suffered several decades of French colonisation and achieved independence at the same time to then endure indigenous authoritarian regimes, which gradually opened the political arena to a restricted multipartism (Angrist 1999; Storm 2007). Before 2011, they featured a pro-democracy opposition that covered a strikingly broad political spectrum (Haugbolle and Cavatorta 2011; Sater 2007). Patrimonialist practices were common in both regimes (Achcar 2013 pp. 67-96; Ben Hammouda 2012, pp. 13-38). Particularly interesting for this thesis, Morocco and Tunisia embarked upon parallel processes of neoliberal structural adjustment in the 1980s and, in both cases, this triggered social unrest. Both countries also experienced mass mobilisations in 2011 – yet, only in Tunisia did these mobilisations lead to significant political transformation. This opportunity for comparison has not gone unnoticed, and other authors have taken advantage of it with different research topics (e.g. Allal and Bennafla 2011; Cammett 2007; Charrad 2001; Mohsen-Finan 2013; White 2001).

The time frame of the comparison goes from independence – achieved by both countries in 1956 – to the 2011 uprisings and their aftermath. The period from the eve to the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings is analysed in particular depth.

The thesis draws on a variegated range of data sources, which were analysed through qualitative coding (see Boyatzis 1998). The main data sources are the following:

-Semi-structured interviews: as the social processes under investigation are recent, it was possible to interview the actors who had a direct role in them. Semi-structured interviews were particularly apt because they allowed to direct the conversation towards the themes and indicators of interest while at the same time giving space to the interviewees to express in some depth their interpretation of the phenomena under study (Brinkmann 2013).

For this research, 94 semi-structured interviews were realised. In Tunisia, the interviews were conducted in Greater Tunis, Kasserine, Gafsa, Sfax, and Sidi Bouzid,

as well as in smaller towns in the vicinities of these cities. In Morocco, the interviews were carried out in Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Marrakesh, Khouribga, Agadir, and Fes. Most interviewees were rank-and-file and mid-level trade unionists from a wide range of employment sectors. However, workers with no union responsibilities, top-level trade union leaders, social movement and party activists, civil servants, experts, and members of the unemployed associations were also interviewed. Moving outside of the capital cities and talking with activists and workers located in different positions in respect to the labour confederations allowed the author to gain a multi-faceted and articulated grasp of Morocco and Tunisia's working-class mobilisations and trade unionism.

The interviews were conducted in French, which is widely spoken in the two countries.[60] The interviewees were contacted mostly over the phone, although some were reached directly in their offices or approached on social media. In most cases, they were in principle available to speak to the researcher, but this did not prevent a long series of cancellations and the fact that several individuals refused *de facto* to be interviewed. Over time, the network of contacts in both countries grew relatively large, which facilitated the task of communicating with potential interviewees in new cities. In order for the participants to be protected from potential harm, they were asked for their explicit consent to take part in the research, were requested not to disclose dangerous information, and were granted anonymity and confidentiality.

One problem with interviews is the accuracy of the interviewee's memories, especially concerning events that took place several years before. This is why interviews were triangulated with other interviews concerning the same events, as well as with news articles and other archival and secondary sources. Additionally, the meaning that an interviewee ascribes to an event is susceptible to change in light of later developments. Reactivity of this kind can be a source of interesting data in itself, as it suggests divergences between initial evaluations and intentions and actual outcomes. Therefore, when possible, the researcher tried to assess how the interpretations of the interviewees changed with time, by asking directly or by comparing them with earlier statements by the interviewees.

Interviews were used to gather data on the functioning of labour institutions,

[60] The author has training in Arabic, however, given his lack of fluency, French was the most practical option.

on perceptions of the balance of class power, and on the playing out of the struggles that contributed to changing these structures, particularly during the 2011 uprisings, including the motivations and interpretations of the involved actors. Interviews were necessary to complement other data sources on labour institutions – such as labour legislation and state reports – because constraints and inducements often operate in informal ways that are not captured by official sources.

-News articles: archival research was conducted in the documental centres of Rabat and Tunis, as well as online. This resulted in a digitalised press archive on Moroccan and Tunisian workers' mobilisations and trade unionism featuring over 2,500 items. The archival data was used to prepare the semi-structured interviews, to triangulate the factual information provided by the interviewees, and to contribute to answering the research questions with information on the functioning of labour institutions, indicators of working-class power, and the history of class struggles (again, with a more in-depth focus on the 2011 uprisings).

-Labour legislation: the most important pieces of labour legislation in Morocco and Tunisia are the respective labour codes. Tunisia adopted its first labour code in 1966 and significantly reformed it in 1994 and 1996, while Morocco approved its first labour code in 2003. The labour codes and other pieces of labour legislation were especially useful to gather information on the three dimensions of labour institutions: substantial inducements, organisational inducements, and constraints. This information was complemented with interviews and secondary sources, since – as the latter sources strongly confirm – laws very often go partially or totally unapplied.

-Socioeconomic statistics: socioeconomic statistics and related reports – particularly by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), ILO, and Morocco and Tunisia's national statistics bureaus[61] – provided important information on the evolution of working-class compositions in the two countries, substantial inducements to the workers, and indicators of working-class power. There are several gaps in the available statistical data, especially for what concerns the early decades of independence. However, the data gathered was sufficient to delineate a clear picture of the main transformations and trends. As several commentators noted (e.g. Achcar 2013, pp. 29-36; Pfeifer 1999), some statistics are often quite unreliable – particularly

[61] These are the *Haut-Commissariat au Plan* (HCP) in Morocco and the *Institut National de la Statistique* (INS) in Tunisia.

those on social indicators like poverty and unemployment – which is why they were used with caution and should be read with similar prudence. However, the differences between Morocco and Tunisia according to the statistical indicators central to this research are consistent and wide enough to draw solid conclusions on their overall different levels of substantial inducements and working-class power.

-Secondary sources: academic publications on the political, socioeconomic, and labour history of Morocco and Tunisia were coded when they provided information on the themes and indicators relating to the research sub-questions. This published information was thus reinterpreted in light of the theoretical framework and the questions of this research, and combined with the data stemming from the primary sources. Secondary sources were particularly useful to investigate the emergence and development of labour institutions in the first decades of independence.

This research has also benefited from published memoirs of political activists and trade unionists (see Chapter 1), which often contain rich empirical information as well as their authors' interpretations of relevant historical events and processes. Additional sources include documents produced by the trade unions themselves (statements, press releases, internal regulations, etc.) and by the state (press releases, ministerial reports, etc.). These sources were accessed through archival research or they were provided by some of the research participants. All primary sources are referenced in the "Primary Sources" section of the bibliography.[62]

Such sources were combined to build a historical narrative of social struggles – and particularly class struggles – in the relatively similar cases of Morocco and Tunisia. Following the theoretical guidelines provided by autonomist Marxism, the comparison focused on the themes of working-class composition, labour institutions, and working-class power.

Conclusion

This thesis is based on an autonomist Marxist understanding of social change, emphasising the role of struggles from below in creating and transforming the structures of society. When studying trade unionism, the most relevant type of social struggle is class struggle. In the heretic, autonomist-inspired conception of class

[62] Therefore, news articles, legislation, statistics, memoirs, and other non-academic documents will not be found in the "Secondary Sources" section of the bibliography.

adopted by this thesis, the working class is not composed simply of manual workers or waged employees, but of anybody excluded from significant ownership and control of capital.

This theoretical approach, emphasising workers' self-activity and an expanded notion of working class, sees the trade unions not as proxies for the working class, but as mediating instances between workers and capital. As such, the unions are part of systems of labour institutions. Whether shifts in the balance of class power and struggles from below will change a given system of labour institutions in a gradual and negotiated way, or in an abrupt and insurrectional manner, depends importantly on how flexible or rigid the system is. The thesis analyses the strategies deployed by the state to control workers and trade unions as an entry point to distinguish between different systems of labour institutions.

The flexibility or rigidity of labour institutions, however, does not provide much information on the possible directions of social change. In this respect, the contributions of the trade unions to mobilisations for social justice and democracy are significantly influenced by the level of working-class power and by the strategies of the relevant actors to mobilise such power in the struggle. In order to build a viable comparison of working-class power in Morocco and Tunisia, this concept was operationalised along the dimensions of structural power and associational power.

This thesis is the result of extensive qualitative empirical research, drawing on a wide range of sources to show how divergent historical trajectories of class struggles led to different working-class compositions, systems of labour institutions, and levels of working-class power in Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 uprisings. It thus maps the different contexts in which the uprisings played out and builds a qualitative narrative of how the relevant trade union actors navigated such contexts.

Chapter 3 – Morocco: The Transformations of Authoritarian Conservative Pluralism

Introduction

This chapter provides a historical account of Moroccan trade unionism in order to analyse labour institutions through the lenses of the three dimensions discussed in the theoretical framework: substantial inducements, organisational inducements, and constraints. Morocco and Tunisia's recent histories were conceptually divided into two broad phases: the post-independence phase and the neoliberal phase, connected by a transitional period in the 1970s that coincided with an intense cycle of struggle in both countries.

The post-independence phase in both Morocco and Tunisia began in 1956. The Moroccan post-independence phase can be said to have ended with the first coup attempt in 1971, which marked the beginning of a transitional phase that lasted until 1984, when IFI-led structural adjustment was launched. The neoliberal phase ran from the mid-1980s to the late 2000s. The chapter is thus divided into four sections: a contextualisation section that presents the origins of Moroccan trade unionism, followed by three sections that compare how social struggles shaped labour institutions in the post-independence phase, the transitional period, and the neoliberal phase.

In the post-independence phase, the Moroccan system of labour institutions can be labelled "authoritarian conservative pluralism", whereby "authoritarian" refers to high constraints, "conservative" to low substantial inducements, and "pluralist" to a configuration of organisational inducements based on trade union pluralism. Moroccan postcolonial labour institutions were characterised by widespread informality and – different from Tunisia – by the marginalisation of organised labour from the social bases of the regime.

In the neoliberal phase, the institutional system transformed into what is described here as "semi-authoritarian conservative pluralism". The most notable change was a partial political opening engineered from above to contain the social struggles that had been threatening the stability of the regime. Such opening allowed

for an expansion of civil and political rights that – while falling well short of democratisation – augmented the institutional flexibility of the regime. Working-class power remained relatively weak and substantial inducements, while increasing in some domains, stayed below Tunisian levels. In the meantime, trade union pluralism had turned into a balkanisation of organised labour, with a myriad of confederations wielding only limited power.

Therefore, by the time of the 2011 uprisings, Moroccan labour found itself in a different position compared to its Tunisian counterpart. The balance of class power was less favourable to the workers, while the institutional framework – featuring union fragmentation and party intermediation between the unions and the state – displayed a remarkable degree of flexibility compared to Tunisia. As Chapter 6 will show, this placed the regime in a better position to defuse social conflict.

3.1 The Origins of Moroccan Trade Unionism and the National Movement

This section provides a historical contextualisation that discusses the origins of Moroccan trade unionism under the French protectorate and the role of the unions in the national liberation struggle. Moroccan labour, through the organisational vehicle of the UMT, was a pole of the anticolonial National Movement together with the nationalist *Istiqlal* (Independence) Party and the armed resistance. However, different from Tunisia, Moroccan labour participated in the anticolonial struggle through its own national organisation only in the latest stages of the fight for independence and it had a less central role compared to that of the UGTT. This contributed to its marginalisation in the postcolonial regime.

Similar to the Tunisian case, Moroccan trade unionism was initially imported from Europe under the French protectorate, with the local branch of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT) established in 1930 as the first legal confederation and renamed *Union Générale des Syndicats Confédérés du Maroc* (UGSCM) in 1946 (Ayache 1982; 1990). The *dahir* (royal decree) on trade unions of 24 December 1936 mentioned the right to unionise for European workers only, while the *dahir* of 24 June 1938 explicitly forbade Moroccan workers from unionising. However, following 1944, Moroccan workers began to join the CGT/UGSCM in great numbers despite the legal ban (Ayache 1990, pp. 93-108). The main centre of Moroccan trade unionism was the area of Casablanca, the economic capital that attracted the lion's share of investments and was a major pole of internal immigration from the East and South of

the country.

The most prominent organised manifestation of Moroccan nationalism was the *Istiqlal* Party (see Zisenwine 2010). The *Istiqlal* was essentially an expression of the Moroccan urban bourgeoisie, concentrated in commerce and real estate (Waterbury 1970, pp. 94-110). However, the *Istiqlal* also developed a leftist wing of intellectuals aiming to establish a social base among the working class. In 1946, the *Istiqlal* leadership forbade its members from joining the UGSCM. Yet in late 1948, faced with the fact that Moroccan workers continued to unionise, it changed its position and encouraged its militants to compete for positions of authority in the French confederation (Forst 1976, p. 273). In the meantime, the Moroccan Sultan Mohammed V had struck an alliance with the *Istiqlal* and started to show some sympathy for the demands of Moroccan workers.[63]

Throughout the 1940s, Moroccan workers did not establish an autonomous Moroccan confederation, which possibly accounts for the lesser role of Moroccan trade unionism in the national liberation struggle, relative to the UGTT. They were, however, far from passive, waging combative strikes – especially in 1947-48 – and standing for civil rights and for the end of the protectorate. Since the UGSCM 4th Congress in 1946, the communist-led confederation was headed by two SGs, one Moroccan – Mohammed Tahar – and the other French – Henri Prudhomme (Ayache 1990, pp. 173-7). In 1950, the *dahir* forbidding Moroccan workers to join trade unions was abrogated, but there was still no legislation declaring their right to unionise (Ben Bouazza 1992, p. 29). The UGSCM 5th Congress in 1950, which elected Taieb Ben Bouazza and André Leroy as joint SGs, passed a resolution to turn the UGSCM into a fully Moroccan confederation, but repression on the part of the protectorate halted the implementation of this decision (Ayache 1993, p. 94).

The day after UGTT SG Farhat Hached was assassinated in Tunisia (see Chapter 4), the *Istiqlali* UGSCM leaders called a general strike in solidarity to be held on 8 December 1952. On 7 December 1952, the authorities declared that the strike would not be tolerated. The protectorate's hard-line was seen as a provocation by the

[63] On 29 April 1949, the Sultan received a delegation of trade unionists – including the future UMT SG, the *Istiqlali* Mahjoub Ben Seddik – and declared his support for the right of Moroccan workers to unionise. Albert Ayache notes that: "It was the beginning of some kind of *entente*, if not a pact, between the Sultan and the young trade union leader" (Ayache 1998, p. 65, translated from Franch by the author). One could add that perhaps it was the beginning of some kind of *entente* between the Palace and the UMT leadership.

population of Hay Mohammadi – Casablanca's most important working-class neighbourhood – who took to the streets that evening. The police reacted by massacring civilians and carrying out many arrests. On 8 December 1952, the police detained the main Moroccan trade union leaders, raided the Casablanca UGSCM building, and fired upon the funeral procession for the victims. On 11 December 1952, the authorities banned the UGSCM, along with the *Istiqlal* and the *Parti Communiste du Maroc* (PCM) (Ayache 1993, pp. 147-57).

On 20 August 1953, the protectorate deposed Sultan Mohammed V through an alliance with the Moroccan rural and religious elites led by Thami El Glaoui (Marrakesh's *pasha*), who did not appreciate the Sultan's alliance with the urban nationalist movement. From then on, the national liberation struggle intensified, with the appearance of the armed resistance, whose leaders mainly hailed from rural milieus (Waterbury 1970, pp. 203-13). The resistance had as its main demands the reinstatement of Mohammed V and the end of the protectorate.

The events of 7-8 December 1952 established Moroccan labour as one of the three poles of the National Movement, along with the *Istiqlal* and the resistance. But the role of organised labour was not as central as it was in Tunisia, where the UGTT was to some extent able to capture the leadership of the National Movement – including some of its armed wing – after the repression of the *Neo-Destour* Party (see Chapter 4).

Only one year before independence, on 20 March 1955, the Moroccan nationalist labour leaders founded the Moroccan confederation UMT. The founding meeting was attended by 45 delegates and held clandestinely in Ben Bouazza's house in Casablanca. The contest for the post of SG was between Taieb Ben Bouazza and Mahjoub Ben Seddik.[64] Ben Seddik enjoyed the support of the *Istiqlal* leaders, who were mistrustful of Ben Bouazza's alleged communist past (*Zamane*, 12 March 2018). According to Ben Bouazza, before the vote had even taken place, Ben Seddik had sent a press release declaring the composition of the new NEC, with himself as SG (Ben Bouazza 1992, pp. 76-7). When the majority of the delegates voted for Ben Bouazza, Ben Seddik threatened to form a break-away union and Bouazza thus accepted the

[64] Ben Bouazza, originally an organiser of the mining sector in the North West, had already been the USGCM SG and was better connected to the milieus of labour militancy (Ayache 1998, pp. 54-6). Mahjoub Ben Seddik, instead, came from the railway sector and had been a member of the last UGSCM NEC (*Ibid.*, pp. 64-8).

position of vice-SG to avoid the split. Ben Seddik's leadership was then confirmed at the UMT 1st Congress on 24-25 December 1955. Despite his retirement from employment in 1977 (Bazwi 1993, p. 69), Ben Seddik would hold on to the post of UMT SG, without interruption, until his death in 2010.

As Fouad Ben Seddik notes: "The UMT's historical specificity is of course its political genesis from the top, with the general staff preceding the troops" (Ben Seddik 1990, p. 519).[65] The thorough repression of December 1952 had reduced Moroccan trade unionism to little more than a network of informally coordinated activists. The *dahir* of 12 September 1955, however, finally gave Moroccan workers the right to unionise. While Mohammed V returned to Morocco on 16 November 1955 and fervour for the coming independence increased, a strike wave exploded in late 1955 and continued throughout 1956 (Ayache 1993, p. 202). The UMT NEC lost no time in taking advantage of the favourable political context to bring its own base into being: local unions were created before the existence of workplace unions, their leaders were appointed on the basis of political criteria (activism in the *Istiqlal*) and were in turn charged with forming workplace unions and appointing their leaders (Ben Seddik 1990, pp. 515-6). In the enthusiastic phase immediately preceding the end of the protectorate, the UMT multiplied its members, which engendered a serious problem of scarcity of experienced cadres (*Ibid.*, pp. 518-9). The remaining UGSCM groups dissolved and entered the UMT. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these successes, the fruits of independence would turn out to be quite meagre for Moroccan labour.

3.2 The Post-Independence Phase: Authoritarian Conservative Pluralism

This section reconstructs the social struggles that followed Morocco's independence to show how they resulted in a system of labour institutions called here "authoritarian conservative pluralism". Such struggles were characterised by a competition between the National Movement and the Palace for the control of the state. The Palace eventually gained the upper hand by forming a coalition with rural elites. The ensuing system of labour institutions was characterised by high constraints, low substantial inducements to the workers, and a configuration of organisational inducements based on the political marginalisation of multiple labour confederations.

[65] Translated from French by the author. Fouad Ben Seddik should not be confused with his uncle and former UMT SG Mahjoub Ben Seddik.

Regarding working-class composition, the first post-colonial census reveals that, in 1960, 75.2% of the "Muslim"[66] employed population worked in the primary sector in rural areas (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Employment by economic sector and milieu (Morocco, 1960)

	Urban	Rural	Total
Primary	0.9%	75.2%	76.1%
Secondary	5.1%	2.8%	7.9%
Tertiary	9.1%	4.3%	13.4%
Undefined	0.9%	1.7%	2.6%
Total	16.0%	84.0%	100.0%

Calculated by the author based on *Royaume du Maroc* 1961.

Waged employment constituted only 23.3% of total employment (see Table 4), with the official unemployment rate at 7%, the activity rate at 38.9%, and the female activity rate at 7.5%. The relative majority of economically active Moroccan men (36.6%) were "independent workers", while the lion's share of economically active women (86.9%) worked in "family assistance".

Table 4 – Active population by status in employment and gender (Morocco, 1960)

	Female	Male	Total
Employers	0.1%	4.4%	4.5%
Independent	1.6%	23.6%	25.1%
Waged, private sector	2.5%	16.6%	19.2%
Waged, public sector	0.2%	3.8%	3.9%
Waged, undefined sector	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Family assistance	30.9%	8.7%	39.6%
Undefined	0.3%	7.2%	7.4%
Total	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%

Calculated by the author based on *Royaume du Maroc* 1961.

This data shows that the bulk of the "Muslim" Moroccan working-class was composed of unwaged rural peasants. As Rémy Leveau's classic work *Le Fellah*

[66] The census presents separate data for foreigners and for Moroccan "Jews". At the time, the non-"Muslim" population (foreigners and Moroccan "Jews") constituted 4.8% of the total population. All percentages presented here were calculated by the author based on *Royaume du Maroc* 1961.

marocain: Défenseur du trône (1985) argued, most of the peasantry was under the hegemony of the rural elites allied to the Palace. While UMT membership was also open to unwaged workers, the employment conditions of peasants made their unionisation unlikely (Waterbury 1970, p. 198). Therefore, since its beginnings, the UMT struggled with the narrowness of the relatively secure fraction of the working class – mainly located in public administration, transport, mining, and manufacturing (Ben Seddik 1990, pp. 517-8) – within the general technical composition of the Moroccan working class.

The years following independence were characterised by a power struggle for the control of the state between the Palace and the National Movement (see Monjib 1992). At first, the latter – under Mehdi Ben Barka's direction – seemed bound to establish a single-party populist regime, with the monarch reduced to a symbolic role. However, the outcomes of the post-independence struggles in Morocco diverged markedly from the Tunisian case. Contributing to this was the fact that Mohammed V retained much popularity thanks to his opposition to the protectorate, while Moroccan labour organisation was more recent than its Tunisian counterpart and thus more fragile.

To counter the National Movement, Mohammed V established an alliance with the very social coalition that had contributed to his ousting. As Leveau summarises:

> Independence was obtained by a coalition gathering, behind the *Istiqlal*, the King, the urban bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the working class, against a colonial regime based on rural and religious elites. As an inheritance from the protectorate, the *Istiqlal* controlled, at the beginning, the administration […]. But the *Istiqlal*'s mistakes eventually prompted the rural elites – who were threatened by the end of the colonial regime – and the peasantry – worried about the effects of the modernisation process clumsily started by the administration – to support the monarch.[67] (Leveau 1985, p. 72)

The struggle between the Palace and the National Movement was accompanied by a parallel struggle within the National Movement itself, between its conservative

[67] Translated from French by the author.

and its progressive wings. The former was represented by the *Istiqlal*'s old guard and its business networks (Waterbury 1970, pp. 169-95), while the latter was constituted by a coalition of the *Istiqlal*'s left-wing, the UMT, and sections of the resistance (*Ibid.*, pp. 196-216).

After the *Istiqlal* SG Ahmed Balafrej – discredited by the mounting peasant uprising in the Rif – resigned from his post as PM on 3 December 1958,[68] Mohammed V charged Abdallah Ibrahim – an *Istiqlal* leftist with close ties to the UMT – with forming a new government (Monjib 1992, pp. 137-55). In the meantime, the disagreements between the *Istiqlal* Left and Right finally split the party. Its progressive wing created the *Union Nationale des Forces Populaires* (UNFP) on 6 September 1959. The UMT followed the UNFP in the split, with the union leaders also having a seat in the UNFP NEC (Menouni 1979, p. 420). This prompted the *Istiqlal* to create its own smaller trade union, the *Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc* (UGTM), officially founded on 20 March 1960. This marked the early beginnings of trade union pluralism in Morocco. The UMT opposed the recognition of the UGTM with a general strike, but the regime did not bend.

On 23 May 1960, Mohammed V dismissed the Ibrahim government and took direct leadership of the executive. The *Istiqlal* entered the royal government, definitively signalling its capitulation – and that of the urban bourgeoisie it represented – to the rural bloc led by the monarchy,[69] accepting the position of junior partner in this conservative social coalition. On 26 February 1961, Mohammed V died and his son Hassan II – the arch-enemy of the Moroccan Left – succeeded to the throne (Monjib 1992, pp. 227-40).

With the fall of the Ibrahim government, the possibility of a Tunisian-style corporatist state-party-union architecture was over:

[68] The PM was also discredited by his lack of actual power, as the King retained *de facto* control over the police and the army. An important feature of Moroccan politics is that semi-informal authoritarian institutions (collectively referred to as the "*Makhzen*") have often more relevance than more formal and democratic ones. For example, the Royal Cabinet – a sort of "shadow government" composed of the King's advisers – can still be said to be more influential than the official government itself (see Vermeren 2009, pp. 60-71).

[69] The Moroccan leftist intellectuals Abraham Serfaty and Abdellah Elharrif divided large landowners into two class fractions, "semi-feudal" landlords emanating from the caïdal system and capitalist landowners. They argued that, during the 1960s, capitalist landowners became the hegemonic fraction of the ruling bloc, thanks to their purchasing of colonial lands from departing Europeans and to the expansion of capitalist relations in the countryside (Majid 1987).

> The majority of the strikes staged in Morocco in 1960 (starting in May) and 1961 had a thinly disguised political character […] against the abandonment of the social policy of the Ibrahim government but especially against the recognition of a rival union that would end the semi-official status of the UMT.[70] (Belaïd 1989, pp. 198-9)

The most remarkable labour mobilisations of the time were the late 1960 and July 1961 miners' strikes (Majid 1987), which resulted in the promulgation and application of the Statute of the Miners (*Dahir* 1-60-007 of 24 December 1960). Yet the defeat of the Ibrahim government created a new crisis in the National Movement – this time within the progressive wing itself – between the leadership of the UMT and that of the UNFP. The UMT SG Mahjoub Ben Seddik, in fact, took an increasingly compromising stance towards the Palace. He was, however, challenged by the public administration federations loyal to the UNFP, most notably in teaching and Postal, Telegraph and Telephone (PTT) (see Benhlal 1985). Ben Seddik and his associates were able to maintain control of most unionised industries and several state agencies. However, this came at the cost of the dissolution, in the early 1960s, of the national multi-employer industrial federations (Majid 1987). The workplace unions of most private sector firms could thus only rely on the local and regional unions for coordination purposes (Menouni 1979, p. 170).

The UMT public administration federation called a general strike for 19 June 1961, but the UMT NEC refused to back it and the strike was cancelled at the last minute (Waterbury 1970, pp. 220-1). The PTT federation reiterated the call for a public administration general strike to be held on 20 December 1961. This time, with UNFP's support, the strike took place, but the postmen were only joined by a few public sector structures, while the UMT NEC directed its efforts at moderating the unrest (*Ibid.*, pp. 221-2).

The UNFP 2nd Congress held on 25-27 May 1962 was marked by a struggle between party and union leaderships. Ben Barka – advocating a "revolutionary option in Morocco" – called for the submission of the union to the political strategy of the party (Ben Barka 1966), while Ben Seddik defended the autonomy of the UMT. The quarrels between the UMT and the UNFP became manifest through their divergent

[70] Translated from French by the author.

positions on the 7 December 1962 constitutional referendum and the first post-independence parliamentary elections that took place on 17 May 1963 (Moore 1970, pp. 186-7).

With the approval of the new authoritarian constitution and the electoral "win"[71] by the monarchist *Front pour la Défense des Institutions Constitutionnelles*, the Palace formalised its victory over the National Movement. As such, Hassan II gained the confidence to crack down on the "disloyal opposition". On 16 July 1963, he proceeded to arrest around one hundred UNFP cadres on the grounds of plotting against his life (Daoud 2007, pp. 84-6). The raid on the UNFP leadership was followed by around 5,000 arrests in the leftist milieus and many forced disappearances (Vermeren 2002, pp. 36-8). In a memoir written from prison, the UNFP cadre and UMT PTT federation activist Omar Benjelloun accused Ben Seddik of colluding with the regime despite his radical rhetoric; the UMT's passivity in the "conspiracy affair" being the culmination of a longstanding *entente* between the top union leaders and the Palace (Benjelloun 2002-03).

The conservative wing of the National Movement was thus co-opted, while the progressive wing was repressed or marginalised. Yet Hassan II's political masterpiece was not as perfect as it seemed. On 23 March 1965, a demonstration of high school students in Casablanca turned into a riot as precarious workers joined the protest. Despite the intervention of the army, it took two days of bloodshed to quash the unrest. In June 1965, Hassan II declared a state of emergency. On 29 October 1965, Ben Barka was kidnapped and assassinated in Paris. The UMT called a general strike for 12-13 November 1965, demanding an end to the state of emergency and the formation of a new government (Waterbury 1970, pp. 227-8). Clement Moore holds that the strike was called "ostensibly in reaction to the kidnapping but actually as a show of strength against the UNFP Ben Barkists" (Moore 1970, p. 188).

Under the thoroughly repressive conditions of the state of emergency, the Palace was less in need of the acquiescence of the UMT leadership, whose base had been weakening since independence. On 7 July 1967, Ben Seddik himself was arrested for criticising the regime's foreign policy in the wake of the Six-Day War. Tens of trade unionists were also arrested in the following days (Menouni 1979, p. 403). The UMT called a general strike for 12 July 1967 – once again to no avail. The UMT SG

[71] The elections were in fact rigged (Storm 2007, p. 24).

was only released after 18 months.

The regime that emerged from these struggles was built upon a *conservative* social basis composed of the rural elites, the peasants under their hegemony, and the urban bourgeoisie in a subordinate position.[72] Additionally, European capital remained in control of the commanding heights of the economy (Clement 1986, pp. 15-6). Substantial inducements to the working class were thus limited. The regime was also *authoritarian*, in that the Palace did not hesitate to harshly repress any real opposition and rig elections (see Storm 2007) to unilaterally control the key institutions of the state. Unlike Tunisia, however, the regime allowed party and trade union *pluralism*, relying on divide-and-conquer tactics to marginalise or co-opt rivals.

To this day, **substantial inducements** to the working class are lower in Morocco than in Tunisia. The Ibrahim government had adopted a typical populist five-year plan that was based upon heavy industry via protectionism, land reform, and an expansion of welfare (Monjib 1992, pp. 145-55). This policy was, however, rapidly reversed when the King took over the government. As Leveau notes, the abandonment of developmentalism was politically motivated and linked to the social bases of the new regime:

> Very quickly, the evolution of the situation made [the Palace] fear that it would lose the support of the local elites before having managed to attract other social groups that might have encouraged these reforms, but without accepting a continuing active role on the part of the monarchy. […] These fears accentuated the conservative aspects of his [Hassan II's] policy…[73] (Leveau 1985, p. 10)

In continuity with the policies of the protectorate, most state efforts focused on encouraging private agriculture for export through the construction of high dams and the expansion of irrigation, which – coupled with increasing land ownership concentration – reinforced the power of the economic elite that gradually took over most of the formerly foreign-owned lands (Swearingen 1988, pp. 179-85).

In the first four years of independence, important social legislation was

[72] As Khalid Alioua put it: "After Independence the Moroccan state ruled the cities through the countryside" (Alioua 1990, p. 87).
[73] Translated from French by the author.

approved[74] but the defeat of the National Movement meant that the promulgation of the Labour Code – a key demand of the UMT – was indefinitely postponed, while the application of the existing legislation remained highly incomplete.

Concerning job security, the royal decrees of 14 August 1967 regulated layoffs in the private sector.[75] They stated that mass layoffs had to be authorised by a commission presided over by the governor, unless the concerned workers were hired temporarily or replaced within eight days. This confirmed the legal recognition of temporary contracts and it also meant that mass layoffs did not require authorisation if the dismissed workers were replaced (Bouharrou 1997, p. 47), which left room for the disposal of militant workers or simply workers with higher seniority benefits. Finally, unlike in Tunisia (Labour Code 1966, Art. 391), the legal text did not include workers' representatives in the mandatory composition of the layoff commissions.

While data on real wages are not available for this period, the government raised the nominal legal minimum wage in 1959 and 1962 in an attempt to keep its value in line with rising prices. However, the minimum wage subsequently remained frozen until 1970, despite increases in the cost of living (Menouni 1979, p. 324).

The post-independence phase featured a rapid expansion of the public administration, which rose from 68,000 employees in 1955 to 256,775 employees in 1971 (*Ibid.*, p. 91), that is 17% of the waged employed population. However, Tunisia's public sector as a whole (the public administration plus the SOEs) likely employed a higher share of the workforce in the 1960s due to the high number of SOEs created under Ben Salah's government (see Chapter 4).

According to experts (Catusse 2010; El Said and Harrigan 2014), the Moroccan welfare state and public sector were always more limited compared to Tunisia. On 29 March 1965, in the aftermath of the Casablanca riots, Hassan II famously declared against intellectuals: "It would have been better if you had been all illiterates"[76] (quoted in Rollinde 2002, p. 123). This declaration is significant in light of the fact that, to this day, Morocco has the worst human development and educational indicators in North Africa (UNDP 2016).

Organisational inducements to trade union officials were moderate but

[74] Including *dahir* 1-56-093 of 8 July 1957 on workplace health, *dahir* 1-57-182 of 9 April 1958 on the rights of agricultural labourers, *dahir* 1-59-352 of 31 October 1959 indexing wages to prices, and *dahir* 1-59-148 of 31 December 1959 on social security.
[75] Royal decrees 314-66, 315-66, 316-66, 317-66, 319-66 of 14 August 1967.
[76] Translated from French by the author.

significant. The main difference with Tunisia was that the Moroccan state – after initially encouraging a single-trade union system as a concession to the National Movement – recognised trade union pluralism in 1960.[77] Along with the *Istiqlal*-linked UGTM, other political parties – such as the monarchist Amazigh-based *Union Constitutionnelle* (UC) – created their own trade unions, although the latter remained largely irrelevant (Moore 1970, p. 184). This abolished the UMT's monopoly of workers' representation and thus ended the semi-official status to which the first Moroccan labour confederation had aspired.

Trade union and party pluralism ruled out the possibility of a triangular state-party-union architecture of the Tunisian kind. In Morocco's post-independence phase, top UMT leaders were also members of the political bureau of the *Istiqlal* and, after the split, of the UNFP (Menouni 1979, pp. 415-27). Yet with the political marginalisation of the UNFP and the deterioration of UMT-UNFP relations, this overlapping of union-party memberships did not lead to the same influence on and within the state that characterised the UGTT-*Neo-Destour* combination.

During the first years of independence, the government created several tripartite institutions[78] to incorporate the UMT into policy-making but, under Hassan II, these bodies became inactive (see Bouharrou 1997, p. 82; Menouni 1979, p. 400). The UMT, just like the *Istiqlal*, had ten representatives in the Consultative Assembly that were appointed by Mohammed V in 1956. Later, workers' representatives selected through the professional elections (see below) were given five seats in the Chamber of Councillors – the higher chamber of the Parliament that first convened in 1963. The Chamber of Councillors was, however, suspended during the state of emergency that was declared in 1965. The decay of tripartite institutions and parliamentary representation meant that the UMT's weak incorporation happened chiefly through informal channels, particularly irregular public consultations with the monarch in times of crisis and private communications between the top union leadership, especially the UMT vice-SG Mohammed Abderrazak,[79] and the Royal Cabinet (Moore

[77] As formalised by decree 2-60-499 of 8 October 1960 ending the governmental right to veto new trade unions that had been stated by decree 2-57-0571 of 17 July 1957 on trade unions.

[78] Including the Higher Council of the Plan, the Higher Council of Collective Agreements, the Consultative Council of Labour Health, the Central Commission of Prices and Wages, the Higher Council of the Public Administration, the national and local Workforce Commissions, and the local Joint Commissions for the Supervision of Employment Agencies.

[79] Abderrazak was the SG of the UMT electricity federation. In 1956, he had been co-opted into the UMT NEC and in 1958 he had substituted Ben Seddik's rival Ben Bouazza as vice-SG (Ayache 1998, p. 28). As we will see, he will be implicated in the UMT's most notorious corruption scandals.

1970, pp. 187-90; Waterbury 1970, p. 222).

The state, however, still influenced the trade unions by including them in some bipartite and tripartite institutions, funding them in various ways, and providing formal and informal advantages to trade union officials. Trade union representatives, in fact, were present on the executive boards of the national pension funds – most importantly the *Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale* (CNSS) – and smaller insurance funds (the "*caisses mutuelles*") and managed firm-level welfare bodies (the "*comités d'œuvres sociales*"). This provided trade unionists with access to resources that they sometimes administered in a clientelist and even plainly corrupt manner, as later scandals would reveal (see *France Libertés* 2011; *La vie éco*, 24 June 2005). Additionally, as in Tunisia, the unions gained the right to manage hiring in some sectors, e.g. the ports (Ben Seddik 1990, p. 571) and several trade unionists were individually appointed to managerial positions in state agencies (Menouni 1979, pp. 400-1).

In his memoir, Benjelloun mentions direct funding from the state (central and local) to the UMT in the early years of independence (Benjelloun 2002-03). Moreover, many UMT buildings were former French administrative buildings that the state had conceded to the union.[80] There was no check-off system for membership fees in the public sector like in Tunisia,[81] but the state put in place a system of union secondments in which – similar to Tunisia – the employer, most often the state, continued to pay the wage for full-time union officials (see *dahir* 1-58-008 of 24 February 1958, Art. 48 bis).

Concerning the informal advantages of the time, Benjelloun (2002-03) held that the central leadership used various forms of clientelism and corruption – including the manipulation of secondments, union dues, external funding, and relationships to the powerful – to create a network of loyal cadres.[82] According to some observers, the regime's threat to suspend all organisational inducements if the UMT followed the UNFP in its challenge against the Palace was an important factor in the distancing of the union from the party (Benjelloun 2002-03; Menouni 1979, pp. 387-9; Moore 1970,

[80] This explains the fact that up to today the UMT is the best equipped confederation in terms of office space.
[81] An exception was the *Office National d'Électricité* (ONE) – the state-owned electricity provider – where Mohammed Abderrazak had negotiated an automatic check-off scheme for the UMT.
[82] The diffusion of these practices was aggravated by the fact that the UMT passed very rapidly from being a small clandestine network to a mass semi-official organisation. The urgent need for cadres meant that many of the new arrivals did not have a history of labour militancy and were thus more prone to unprincipled behaviour (Benjelloun 2002-03).

pp. 185-90).

The most important **constraints** were state protection for the lack of internal union democracy, the direct repression of political dissidents, and the limitation of collective bargaining, workplace organisation, and the right to strike.

As Ayache writes, the UMT was run on a very centralised and hierarchical basis:

> The NEC, in fact the national SG, could intervene to cancel an election or dissolve a committee, to impede a strike or conversely to accompany it and intervene in its settlement.[83] (Ayache 1993, p. 201)

Like the UGTT, the UMT had a body of union stewards colloquially known as "the militia" (Ben Seddik 1990, p. 524) that could be used to repress internal dissent.[84] According to Benjelloun (2002-03), Mahjoub Ben Seddik directed the UMT through a patron-client network of loyalists that operated effectively to hinder internal debate and the election of dissident leaders. Ben Seddik's associates would use the manipulation of secondments and financial resources, workplace transfers or layoffs – in coordination with management – of dissident unionists, membership freezes, the dissolution of elected ECs, and plain – and at times violent – harassment of dissidents.[85] For example, Benjelloun himself was kidnapped, held in a cellar, and severely mistreated by members of the UMT "militia" while trying to attend the 3rd UMT Congress in January 1963 as a delegate (Benjelloun 2010). After the 3rd Congress, the UMT leadership dissolved the PTT federation (dominated by the Left) and expelled several leftist cadres (Monjib 1992, pp. 288-9). These testimonies regarding the lack of internal democracy appear to be credible given Ben Seddik's record 55-year tenure as UMT SG.[86]

In contrast to the case of the UGTT, the regime did not need to directly intervene to attempt to impose a pliant leadership upon the UMT. Rather, the regime could rely upon Ben Seddik to prevent the rise of more radical or ambitious SGs.

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[83] Translated from French by the author.
[84] Fouad Ben Seddik also talks of some sort of internal "secret police" (*Ibidem*).
[85] Waterbury adds clientelist hiring practices (Waterbury 1970, p. 229).
[86] The institutional mechanism to legitimise the reproduction of the leadership was the Commission for Candidatures, which compiled the list of the new NEC members and then proposed it to the Congress. According to Menouni (1979, p. 148), the preferences of the incumbent NEC went unchallenged in the Commission for Candidatures, and the Congress was a mere means to ratify them.

However, as Abdeltif Menouni esteemed, the broader state repression of political dissent and social unrest was a necessary condition for the stifling of internal union democracy:

> [T]he Moroccan regime, constraining the actions of the trade unions first by pulling them apart from the UNFP and the Resistance and then by opposing energetically the escalation of demands [from the base], intervened in the selection of the leadership.[87] (Menouni 1979, p. 408)

Leaders and militants on the Moroccan Left were subject to several waves of arrests, systematic torture, and forced disappearances (see Vairel 2014), while the regime violently quashed the 1958-59 Rif uprising and the 1965 Casablanca riots. This had the effect of weakening the UMT Left – stifling its efforts to challenge Ben Seddik's domination of the organisation. The state sometimes also intervened violently and directly in union affairs. For example, on 20 December 1961, during the PTT strike, Benjelloun was kidnapped and tortured (Benjelloun 2010).

In respect to limitations on labour rights, *dahir* 1-57-119 of 16 July 1957 on trade unions did not contain provisions for the protection of workplace unions (Bouharrou 2007, pp. 36-9). However, a legal framework for consultative firm-level workers' representation, through workplace professional elections, was established.[88] Professional elections were meant to serve as the basis for the selection of workers' representatives in the Chamber of Councillors. The *dahirs* granted protections for workers' delegates against abusive layoffs, as well as paid time for representational work, and meeting and communicational spaces. The trade unions could present their candidates at professional elections, but – given the political marginalisation of trade unionism and the absence of legal protections for workplace unions – the institutionalisation of workers' delegates meant that union representation was overshadowed by non-union representation (see Bouharrou interviewed in *La vie éco*, 19 October 2012).

Dahir 1-57-067 of 17 April 1957 on collective bargaining established a legal framework for collective agreements on a national, local, or firm level, while *dahir* 1-

[87] Translated from French by the author.
[88] See Decree 2-59-0200 of 5 May 1959; *dahir* 1-61-116 of 29 October 1962; decree 2-63-164 of 14 November 1963.

58-145 of 29 November 1960 established the Higher Council of Collective Agreements, charged of encouraging collective bargaining. In the early years of independence, over one hundred collective agreements were signed (Meknassi and Rioux 2010, p. 9). However, analogously to the bipartite and tripartite corporative bodies, collective bargaining was abandoned in the 1960s.[89]

As opposed to Tunisian corporatism, the UMT did call political general strikes in 1958,[90] 1960, 1965, and 1967. The right to strike was granted by the 1962 Constitution, which stated that an organic law would specify the conditions for a strike to be legal. However, such law was never promulgated, which means that workers can effectively strike without being victimised only where there is a favourable balance of power on the ground. Moreover, some legal norms severely restrained the constitutional right to strike. *Dahir* 1-57-119 of 16 July 1957 on trade unions established that they could only defend the economic interests of their members, which was used to justify the layoffs that followed the 1965 and the 1967 general strikes (Menouni 1979, p. 250). Decree 2-57-1465 of 5 February 1958, on the trade union rights of public administration employees, stated: "For all employees, any organised suspension of work, any collective act of indiscipline, can be punished without disciplinary guarantees" (Art. 5).[91] Ahmed Bouharrou comments that: "It seems that, on a strictly juridical level, any collective action organised as a strike or under other forms is inacceptable [for public administration employees]"[92] (Bouharrou 2007, p. 35).[93] Finally, Article 288 of the 1962 version of the Penal Code criminalised "anybody who, using violence, assaults, threats, or fraud, tries to carry out or maintain an organised suspension of work, with the aim of raising or lowering wages, or undermining the right to manage a business or the right to work" (*dahir* 1-59-413 of 26 November 1962, Art. 288).[94] The revision of Article 288 of the Penal Code is still a traditional demand of Moroccan labour, since the trade unions complain that it is

[89] Only a dozen collective agreements – all at firm level – were signed between the early 1960s and the late 1990s, and the frequent – and weaker – substitutes were non-binding accords between the employer and the workers' delegates (*Ibidem*).
[90] The official motivation of the first post-independence general strike was a simple mass layoff in Rabat, but it was most probably an attempt by Ben Seddik to oppose the *Istiqlal* Right's choice to form the Balafrej government (Monjib 1992, pp. 120-1).
[91] Translated from French by the author.
[92] Translated from French by the author.
[93] For example, when 200 public employees went on strike on 20 December 1961, 168 were dismissed and they were reintegrated only one year later (Waterbury 1970, p. 222).
[94] Translated from French by the author.

often improperly used to criminalise the constitutional right to strike.[95]

To summarise, between 1956 and 1960 the Left of the National Movement gained a series of organisational inducements for the UMT and started a process that aimed to provide significant substantial inducements to the working class. However, as the conservative social coalition led by the Palace gained increasingly secure control of the state, inducements of both kinds were *de jure* or *de facto* rolled back and constraints increased. While substantial inducements remained low compared to the North African republics, organisational inducements stabilised at a moderate level, which marginalised the unions politically but still meant that they remained sensitive to the threat of the withdrawal of state-sponsored advantages.

3.3 The Transitional Period: The Years of Lead

This section presents the cycle of struggle that constituted the transitional period between the post-independence phase and the neoliberal phase. This moment in Moroccan history is known as the "Years of Lead" because systematic political imprisonment, torture, and forced disappearances on the part of the regime reached new heights (see Vairel 2014). While in Tunisia the radicalisation of the student movement and the mounting strike wave pressured the UGTT leadership to temporarily take a more radical stance towards the regime (see Chapter 4), in Morocco the UMT leadership remained impermeable to pressures from below, which resulted in the further fragmentation and weakening of organised labour.

In the early 1970s, political authoritarianism and conservatism in economic policy imperilled the stability of the regime. With the marginalisation of the progressive opposition and the suppression of broader social mobilisations, the most dangerous threats came from within, as manifested by the military coup attempts of 10 July 1971 and 16 August 1972.[96]

The monarchy responded to these threats by trying to imitate, to a limited extent, the nationalist policies that many Global South countries had adopted after independence. This was encouraged by the 1973 spike in phosphate prices – the

[95] On top of these pieces of legislation, the 19 January 1946 *dahir* on labour conflicts, mandating conciliation and arbitration before a strike, remained valid, but the institutions it had established became inactive (Bouharrou 1997, p. 61) and it was never effectively applied after independence (Menouni 1979, p. 250).

[96] It is likely that some UNFP leaders had been informed about the plans for the latter coup (Bennouna 2002, pp. 193-9).

phosphate industry was Morocco's main earner of hard currency and a direct source of income for the state.[97] In the same year, the government decided to expropriate foreign-owned colonial lands. Yet, as Swearingen notes, 40% of colonial lands had already been sold by their European owners to the Moroccan elite between 1956 and 1973, 24% remained state-managed,[98] and only 36% was redistributed (Swearingen 1988, p. 180; see also Doumou 1990). *Dahir* 1-73-210 of 2 March 1973 provided for the "Moroccanisation" of the economy, mandating that all major firms had to be at least 51% Moroccan owned. This was an opportunity for the country's economic elite to diversify its assets from agriculture and trade into industry and services through family-owned holdings (see Berrada and Saadi 1992). In 1982, Morocco's largest investment holding – the *Omnium Nord-Africain* (ONA) – passed from French to royal control (Clement 1986, p. 17).

Table 5 – Employment by economic sector and milieu (Morocco, 1982)

	Urban	**Rural**	**Total**
Primary	1.7%	40.2%	41.9%
Secondary	16.7%	8.1%	24.7%
Tertiary	22.5%	6.8%	29.3%
Undefined	2.0%	2.0%	4.0%
Total	42.9%	57.1%	100%

Calculated by the author based on *Royaume du Maroc* 1984.

Table 6 – Active population by status in employment and gender (Morocco, 1982)

	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Employers	1.9%	0.1%	2%
Independent	22.3%	2.8%	25.1%
Waged	33.4%	7.1%	40.5%
Family assistance	12.2%	5.4%	17.6%
Apprentices and undefined	1.9%	2.2%	4.1%
Unemployed	8.6%	2.1%	10.7%
Total	80.3%	19.7%	100%

Calculated by the author based on *Royaume du Maroc* 1984.

These policies significantly transformed the Moroccan working-class composition. Census data show that, between 1960 (see Table 3, p. 87) and 1982 (see

[97] Until today, the mines are state-owned through the *Office Chérifien des Phosphates* (OCP).
[98] However, much of it would later fall into the hands of the elite with the gradual privatisation of the agricultural SOEs (*Ibidem*).

Table 5, p. 100), the share of the urban employed population more than doubled, the share of primary sector employment almost halved, and the share of industrial employment tripled. In the same period, the share of waged employment increased from 23.3% of the active population (see Table 4, p. 87) to 40.5% (see Table 6, p. 100).

However, the share of agricultural employment in Morocco remained significantly higher than in Tunisia (see Table 7, p. 141), reducing the potential recruitment pool for the Moroccan labour movement.

Dissent within the military was not the only headache for the monarchy. In fact, the global cycle of struggle of the 1970s affected the Maghreb too. As in Tunisia, the transitional period in Morocco was characterised by a new strike wave and by the leftwards radicalisation of the student movement. The two main New Left groups were the *Mouvement 23 Mars* (founded in 1968) and *Ila Al-Amam* ("Forward", founded in 1970), which mainly emerged from the UNFP and the ex-PCM respectively. At the 15th Congress of the student union *Union Nationale des Étudiants du Maroc* (UNEM), held in 1972, the radical tendencies won the leadership of the organisation at the expense of the UNFP,[99] which eventually led to the banning of the UNEM on 24 January 1973 (Vermeren 2002, pp. 61-2).

On 3 March 1973, the *Tanzim*, a radical UNFP group led by elements of the old resistance, attempted an armed rising in the Middle Atlas. The failure of the insurrection resulted in new arrests. After several student mobilisations and strikes, the state rehabilitated the UNEM on 9 November 1978. However, the continuing arrests of student activists and the militarisation of university life made sure that – after the 17th Congress of 1981 – the 18th Congress never took place (UECSE 2014). To this day, the UNEM survives as a network of student tendencies with no national structures.

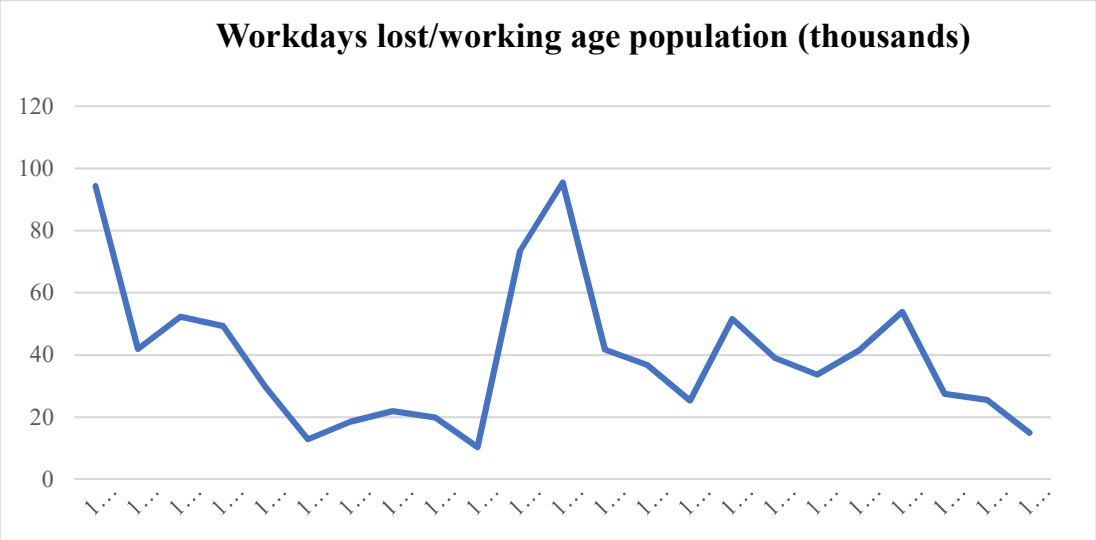
Both Tunisia and Morocco experienced a strike wave in the mid-1950s, corresponding with independence and its immediate aftermath. Labour unrest then declined in the 1960s, although Morocco maintained a higher level of strikes relative to corporatist Tunisia (Belaïd 1989, pp. 198-204). The first signal of a renaissance of labour mobilisations came in September 1968, with the 7,000 strong, two-month long

[99] On 2 August 1972, Abdelaziz Menebhi and Abdelwahed Belkabir – the newly elected President and Vice-President of the UNEM – were arrested (UECSE 2014). The mobilisations for their liberation prompted a wave of expulsions and arrests of militant students.

strike of the Khouribga miners (Majid 1987). Morocco's new strike wave (see Ben Seddik 1986) started in 1971, spiked first in 1972 and then again in 1976 (see Graph 1, p. 102).

The main demands put forward by the workers concerned the defence of wage levels against inflation and opposition to layoffs (Belaïd 1989, p. 211). The most important centres of labour militancy were the mines – particularly the state-owned *Office Chérifien des Phosphates* (OCP) in Khouribga – and the industrial estates surrounding Casablanca, such as Mohammedia's state-owned refinery *Société Anonyme Marocaine de l'Industrie et du Raffinage* (SAMIR). The transport sector also witnessed notable strikes (Abouhani 1995, p. 168). In 1971, the Khouribga miners waged a new two-month strike that ended in victory, despite the withdrawal of support by the UMT NEC (Majid 1987). In the private sector, the most prominent were the textile workers, since textiles had become the country's main manufacturing industry (Daoud 1980, p. 77). Similar to Tunisia, public administration workers also mobilised *en masse*, particularly in teaching, health, and PTT (Benhlal 1985).

Graph 1 – Strike activity in Morocco, 1961-1983



Calculated by the author based on ILO data.

Moroccan workers, however, were likely less unionised than their Tunisian counterparts. While the UGTT claimed between 400,000 and 500,000 members in 1977-76, the UMT had between 250,000 and 300,000 members in the 1970s (Belaïd 1989, p. 209). This would put estimated trade union density for waged workers at

between 45% and 56% for Tunisia,[100] and at around between 15% and 20% for Morocco.[101]

The severity of state repression prevented the New Left, which originated from the universities, from building an important presence in the UMT.[102] In 1972, most leaders of *Ila Al-Amam*, the *Mouvement 23 Mars*, and *Servir le Peuple* were arrested and condemned to lengthy prison sentences (Daoud 2007, pp. 171-2). The *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires* (USFP),[103] however, maintained a solid and dissenting presence in the union, especially in the public administration federations. Yet Ben Seddik and his associates proved to be quite impermeable to pressures from below. The only general strike of the decade was the 1978 strike against Sadat's visit to Israel (Ben Seddik 1986, p. 159) – a relatively innocuous demand in Moroccan politics. Faced with the UMT's lack of initiative and internal democracy, the USFP gradually moved towards creating its own confederation (see Abouhani 1995, pp. 168-9; Benhlal 1985, pp. 235-40).[104]

In 1975, phosphate prices dropped suddenly, and the planned public investments had to be funded through external debt (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998, p. 56). The short-lived experiment in nationalist economic policy came to an end in 1978, when the government adopted an austere Three-Year Plan, which froze public administration wages, raised taxes, and reduced investment by 36% (White 2001, p. 133). Large, inflation-fuelled strikes took place, most notably in teaching (the national sectorial strike of 11-12 April 1978), mining, transport, and the state-owned oil refinery SAMIR (Benhlal 1985, p. 237). The strikes led to the creation of new workplace unions, which on 25-26 November 1978 merged into a new confederation together with the USFP-linked structures of the UMT. The *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (CDT) was thus created, with the primary school teacher

[100] Estimated by the author using data from Belaïd 1989 and Ben Chaabane 2014.
[101] Estimated by the author using data from Belaïd 1989, Menouni 1979, and *Royaume du Maroc* 1984.
[102] Interviews 19, 27.
[103] In 1972, the UNFP's "Rabat faction" (led by Abderrahim Bouabid and other elements from the capital's intellectual milieus) split from the "Casablanca faction" of the party (led by Abdallah Ibrahim and with close ties to the UMT leaders) to create the USFP. The USFP held its founding Congress in January 1975, cutting its ties with the armed groups led by Mohammed Basri. The post-1975 UNFP will lose its political importance to the USFP.
[104] This decision was reinforced by the assassination, on 18 December 1975, of Omar Benjelloun by a militant of the *Chabiba Islamiyya* ("Islamic Youth"), with the probable involvement of the Ministry of the Interior (Dalle 2004, pp. 435-42). The *Chabiba Islamiyya*, founded in 1970, was the main Islamist organisation in Morocco in the 1970s.

Noubir Amaoui as its SG (CDT 2013, p. 8).[105] The CDT's first major shows of force were the strike in solidarity with Palestine on 30 March 1979 and the national strike in the teaching and health sectors on 10-11 April 1979 (CDT 2013, pp. 12-3).

Such class struggles pressured the government into abandoning its austerity plan in 1979 (Azam and Morrison 1994, p. 92). However, in 1980, Morocco negotiated a stabilisation plan with the IMF. On 28 May 1981, the government announced its intention to cut subsidies for basic consumption goods. On 15 June 1981, the CDT called for a general strike against the cuts, to be held on 20 June 1981, and asked the other labour confederations to join (see Benhlal 1985, pp. 239-42). The UMT and the UGTM refused, but – under pressure – the UMT regional union of Casablanca declared a regional general strike to be held on 18 June 1981. Similar to Tunisia's Black Thursday, on the day of the CDT strike, precarious workers in Casablanca took to the streets and the demonstrations turned into riots. The police and the army fired upon the crowds, resulting in a high death toll. In the aftermath, a wave of arrests swept through leftist milieus and Casablanca's working-class neighbourhoods. Hundreds of USFPists and CDTists were arrested, their offices closed, and their newspapers banned. The CDT SG Amaoui was imprisoned between June 1981 and November 1983 (CDT 2013, p. 38).

The 1980 stabilisation plan was dropped in the aftermath of the 1981 general strike, but the government agreed a fresh structural adjustment programme with the IMF in 1983.[106] In January 1984, large riots took place against the price hikes, this time without the involvement of any labour confederation. The unrest reached several regions of the country, with the biggest clashes taking place in the Rif, where numerous protesters were killed. Mass arrests followed, especially among students and the young (Daoud 2007, p. 273). After the riots, cuts to food subsidies were eased

[105] The main point of doctrinal disagreement between the CDT and the UMT concerned the relation between economic and political demands, and thus between the trade union and the party (Interviews 1, 4, 7, 43). The UMT defended the autonomy of trade unionism from partisan politics and *de facto*, since the 1960s, it prioritised economic demands over political ones. The CDT leaders held that the only way to satisfy the economic demands of the union members was by associating them to the broader popular classes in a political struggle, led by the party, for democracy at the national level and against imperialism at the international level.

[106] The new economic policies involved cuts in public spending, freezes on public sector wages and hiring, privatisations, the repeal of the "Moroccanisation" ownership law, reductions in property taxes, reductions in import and export duties, devaluation of the national currency, and the temporary suspension of agricultural taxes (Rhazaoui 1987).

but the government proceeded on the course of structural adjustment, completing the transition to the neoliberal phase.

In Morocco's transitional period, **substantial inducements** followed a quite similar trajectory to the Tunisian one (see Chapter 4), although they started from a lower position. When the crisis took a political form, the regime increased substantial inducements in order to garner consent. Yet as the crisis became economic in nature, pushing the state towards austerity, escalating constraints replaced substantial inducements.

The 1973-77 Five-Year Plan expanded the public sector and public investment. By 1979, the state acquired ownership of 460 enterprises (not counting 118 agricultural firms), achieving a majority ownership in 260 of them (Jouahri 1980, p. 16). Between 1972 and 1977, public administration employment rapidly grew from 268,000 to over 400,000 (Daoud 1980, p. 77). Although job security legislation did not change, this relative increase in public sector employment resulted in the extension of the associated job security to the new recruits. This expansion of secure employment in the public sector probably contributed to broadening the strike wave of the 1970s. In 1978, however, this expansive policy was halted and with the 1983 structural adjustment plan Morocco committed itself to privatisation and austerity.[107] Data on wages for this period is still scant, but UNIDO figures on industrial sector wages indicate that the purchasing power of industrial workers fell dramatically in the early 1980s. Moreover, a survey on wages in medium and large enterprises carried out by the weekly magazine *Jeune Afrique* found that while in Tunisia high cadres earned on average four times as much as deskilled workers, in Morocco this proportion was 11 to 1 (*Jeune Afrique*, 1 September 1983, p. 40).[108] Finally, in 1975, only 14% of the Moroccan employed enjoyed social security coverage (Berrada and Saadi 1992, p. 378).

The **organisational inducements** to trade union officials analysed above were maintained without major changes. Although it is impossible to measure them, informal advantages to UMT officials in the form of corruption appeared to reach new heights, at least according to the account published by Hassan Bazwi (1993), an ex-

[107] Real government capital expenditure was halved between 1983 and 1986 and nominal public administration wages were frozen between 1981 and 1985 (El Said and Harrigan 2014, p. 109).
[108] The survey covered 500 enterprises for seven African countries and had a response rate of 20%. The results are therefore far from certain, but it is credible that wage dispersion was significantly higher in Morocco than in Tunisia, given the higher general inequality existing in the former.

member of the UMT NEC. Bazwi reported the existence of widespread corruption among union cadres and several episodes of private appropriation of large sums of union funds by Ben Seddik himself, in the absence of regulation by any financial commission (*Ibid.*, pp. 161-3).[109]

As seen above, the consultative tripartite bodies that had been established in the first years of independence had fallen into disuse. The Chamber of Councillors had been abolished by the 1970 Constitution, but – under the 1970 and 1972 Constitutions – the single chamber of the parliament included a number of seats reserved for representatives of the workers. The opposition, including the UMT, boycotted the 1970 elections, and the parliament was suspended between 1971 and 1977. Nevertheless, the UMT achieved six seats out of eight in the 1977-1983 legislature. These seats did not give trade unionists real influence over public policy, but they were a source of patronage from the state, administered by the UMT leadership (*Ibid.*, pp. 72-83).

During this period, the UMT also maintained its hegemony over workers' representation in the executive boards of the most important national pension funds, like the CNSS or the *Mutuelle Générale de l'Éducation Nationale* (MGEN) (*Al-Bayane*, 30 October 1993). The UMT vice-SG Mohammed Abderrazak was the Vice-President of the CNSS executive board and the President of the administrative committee in charge of monitoring the CNSS CEO (*Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 26 May 2004). Starting in 1975, the CNSS built 13 polyclinics, using the resources of the pension fund and operating under its management (see CNSS 2009, p. 34). Abderrazak was seen as the man behind this project (*Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 9 December 2004). The CNSS also built 12,452 social housing units between 1984 and 1988 and provided a series of social services to its members (CNSS 2009, pp. 34-6). These projects allowed Abderrazak, among others, to use contracts for suppliers, hiring, and access to services in a clientelist manner, at the expense of the CNSS's finances (*Maroc hebdo*, 19 March 2004a; *Tel quel*, 27 April 2018).

In 1974, the tripartite *Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail* (OFPPT) was created. Similar to the firm-level welfare bodies and insurance funds (see Section 3.2), the OFPPT became a source of patronage for the UMT. According to an investigation by the *Inspection Générale des Finances*

[109] See also *Al-Massae*, 23 February 2012, Appendix, pp. 304-9.

(IGF), until 2001, the OFPPT endowed firms with funding for professional training without any controls, which meant that part of the money went to fictitious enterprises or to enterprises that did not actually use it to carry out training programs for their workers (see *Maroc hebdo*, 7 May 2004). According to the report, the UMT was implicated in the misappropriation of such resources (*Ibidem*). In fact, the UMT was represented on the executive board of the OFPPT and – like the CNSS and the ONE – the OFPPT is a UMT stronghold.

Constraints were notoriously high during this period. Hundreds of political militants and civilians were killed by state violence, either during the repression of demonstrations and riots or through forced disappearances and mistreatment in custody (see Vairel 2014). Torture and arbitrary arrests were used systematically. Opposition news outlets were repeatedly shut down. Political militants were often laid-off or discriminated against in public sector recruitment. The repression of political dissent and social unrest indirectly contributed to the stifling of trade union democracy, because it made it virtually impossible for critics of the incumbent leadership to organise an effective internal opposition. The UMT leadership maintained the undemocratic practices described above (see Bazwi 1993; Menouni 1979, p. 148). Indeed, in 1975, John Waterbury likened the UMT leadership to a "sclerotic mandarinate" (Waterbury 1975, p. 263).

Different from the UGTT's usual adherence to basic internal regulations, the UMT was run in a highly informal manner. Strikingly, the UMT has never had an internal regulation to complement its statute. Electoral procedures and deadlines at all levels were grossly disregarded.[110] Concerning informality, Bazwi claims that "[t]his way of managing the UMT was convenient in that it allowed M. Ben Seddik to be the master of the UMT. 'Too much organisation harms', he used to say" (Bazwi 1993, pp. 65-6). In addition, for Ben Seddik, "[t]he UMT had to be neither strong nor weak, but in a middle ground adequate to maintain his material interests" (*Ibid.*, p. 134).

Very few collective agreements were signed during this period (Menouni 1979, pp. 289-90), while the lack of legal protections for workplace unions continued to go unaddressed. The strike legislation did not change, which allowed the regime itself to victimise strikers on several occasions. The year 1979, in particular, was

[110] For example, during the transitional period there were only two Congresses, one in 1972 and the other in 1979.

marked by mass layoffs and arrests of strikers (Bazwi 1993, p. 88).[111]

Altogether, Morocco's experiment with economic nationalism, with the increase in substantial inducements that this involved, was short-lived and did not fundamentally modify the market-oriented nature of the economy (see El Malki 1989) and the original social bases of the regime. The only significant change in the latter was a sectorial diversification of investment on the part of the economic elite. Industry, however, continued to remain relatively marginal, contributing to union weakness.[112] The expansion of the public sector was short-lived, as industrial unrest in this sector quickly prompted the state to restructure it. Organisational inducements, especially informal ones, were maintained at a level considerable enough to influence the trade unions, but during this period the systematic deployment of heavy constraints was key.

3.4 The Neoliberal Phase: Semi-Authoritarian Conservative Pluralism

The first years of Morocco's neoliberal adjustment were not accompanied by a significant reconfiguration of labour institutions. As shown below, the pattern of union marginality punctuated by rioting continued with the 1990 general strike. During the 1990s, however, the Palace triggered a limited political opening in order to respond to continuing unrest from below. This increased civil and political rights to some extent, while falling well short of democratisation. In the neoliberal phase, substantial inducements to the workers were partially retrenched, but some sectors of the welfare state probably increased more rapidly than in the post-independence phase. The most important innovation in organisational inducements – parallel to the political opening – was the incorporation of the trade unions into a system of consultative social dialogue. Constraints in the form of direct state repression decreased, but state tolerance for widespread and severe anti-union practices in the private sector remained. Overall, while working-class power remained relatively low, the regime partially accommodated struggles from below, creating a more flexible institutional system relative to the one that characterised the post-independence phase.

In the late 1980s, with the liberation of many political prisoners, *Ila Al-Amam* militants started to build a left-wing opposition in the UMT.[113] They chose to work

[111] For example, after the national strike launched by the CDT in the teaching and health sectors on 11 April 1979, more than 1,600 strikers were fired or suspended (Benhlal 1985, pp. 238-9).
[112] In 1977, while manufactured goods constituted 33.5% of Tunisia's exports, they were an insignificant portion of Morocco's (White 2001, p. 108).
[113] Interviews 7, 19, 24, 27, 30, 35.

within the UMT despite their obvious political distance from the leadership because *Ila Al-Amam*, following the Marxist-Leninist precept of workers' unity, had been against the CDT split (see Majid 1987).

The entry of the leftists was in part beneficial to Ben Seddik because it contributed to the UMT's performances in the professional elections[114] and boosted its negotiating power with the state and the employers, since the SG had the possibility of containing the UMT Left when necessary. A leader of the UMT Left said:

> In the 1980s the UMT really was an empty shell. Because at the time it was the CDT… what they called "the historical alternative". But unfortunately the CDT became more bureaucratic than the bureaucracy. It was only after 1986 that Mahjoub Ben Seddik understood that without the Left he couldn't do anything.[115] (Interview 35)

The leftists started with the reorganisation of the UMT's *Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole* (UMT-FNSA), which had become inert during the Years of Lead (see Hakech 2013). These labour activists were civil servants in the Ministry of Agriculture and in agricultural SOEs, but their project was that of extending trade union organisation to the agricultural workers too.[116] On 18 May 1991, the renewed UMT-FNSA 1st Congress elected *Ila Al-Amam* militant Abdelhamid Amin as SG.

In 1995, numerous *Ila Al-Amam* militants joined the project of turning the clandestine group into a legal political party called *Ennahj Eddimouqrati* (The Democratic Path, usually referred to as *Ennahj*). The Nahjists were the backbone of the UMT Left, but to their Left there were also the Marxist-Leninists who had refused to join *Ennahj* (mostly known as the "basists") and *Al-Mounadil-a*'s Trotskyists.[117]

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[114] The number of UMT labour representatives in parliament had declined from six out of eight in the 1977-1983 legislature to five out of ten in the 1984-1992 legislature, and only three in the 1993-1997 legislature. The CDT had achieved three representatives in 1984 and four in 1993, becoming the most represented union in parliament.

[115] All interviews were conducted in French and translated into English by the author.

[116] Interviews 24, 29, 35.

[117] The Moroccan Trotskyists that would create *Al-Mounadil-a* (Militant) started their activities in the 1990s. In 2004, the journal *Al-Mounadil-a* appeared, and the group began to be known by this name. *Al-Mounadil-a* is also the largest group within the social movement organisation *ATTAC Maroc*. The hyphen in their name is a spelling device to avoid gender discrimination through language, as the spelling reflects both the masculine and feminine forms.

During the 1990s and the 2000s, the UMT Left expanded and consolidated its presence, particularly in the *Fédération National de l'Enseignement* (UMT-FNE), the *Fédération Nationale des Ouvriers et Fonctionnaires des Collectivités Locales* (UMT-FNOFCL), and the Rabat-Salé-Témara regional union.

The revival of the UMT-FNE began with its 1995 Congress and grew after a wave of defections from the CDT's teaching federation in the early 2000s.[118] However, after 1995, the militants did not manage to hold a new Congress until 2012.[119] The UMT-FNOFCL, instead, grew out of the Moroccan movement of unemployed graduates,[120] whose most important organisation is the leftist *Association Nationale des Diplômés Chômeurs du Maroc* (ANDCM). Since the early 1990s, the ANDCM managed to get many of its members hired by the local administrations. Many unemployed graduates with a background of activism in the ANDCM consequently organised in the UMT-FNOFCL.

The emergence of the UMT Left developed in parallel to the crisis of the CDT, which reached its zenith in the 1990s but declined in the 2000s. On 14 December 1990, the CDT and the UGTM held a general strike with economic demands against the rising cost of living and political demands for democratisation (see Abouhani 1995, pp. 171-3). Once again, riots erupted. The most severe clashes took place in Fes, with over one hundred casualties of state repression.

In April 1992, the CDT SG (and USFP Political Bureau member) Noubir Amaoui was sentenced to two years in prison for "insulting and defaming" the government. He would be released after 14 months of detention.[121] The repression of the 1990 general strike and Amaoui's arrest indicate that Morocco's pattern of utterly repressive labour relations continued into the first decade of the neoliberal phase. However, in the mid-1990s, an aging Hassan II started to negotiate with the opposition to prepare for a smooth handing over of the throne to his son Mohammed. The USFP,

[118] Interviews 3, 30, 42.
[119] This meant that UMT-FNE SG M'hmed Ghayour, born in 1920, remained in charge despite the mounting strength of the Left in the federation. The resistance of the UMT leadership to allowing a new Congress to take place was probably due to the fact that the UMT traditionally controlled the MGEN, and thus Ben Seddik and his associates did not want this source of revenue to fall into the hands of the leftists.
[120] Interviews 22, 41.
[121] The pretext for the conviction was that, in an interview to *El País* published on 11 March 1992, Amaoui had denounced the pervasive corruption of the Moroccan state and called the ministers "a gang of thieves". However, the CDT leaders convincingly claim that the real reason for Amaoui's conviction was another interview, published in February 1992 by *Hourriyat Al-Mowaten*, in which the trade unionist opined that the Moroccan King should "reign but not rule" (Interview 1).

under the leadership of Aderrahmane Youssoufi, was willing to participate, along with the *Istiqlal*, in the so-called "transition".

The CDT and the UGTM followed the line of their parties and, after 1994, they took part in a series of negotiations aiming to institutionalise a tripartite system of consultative social dialogue inspired by the ILO's model (see Catusse 2001). The UMT boycotted the social dialogue as it considered that it would compromise its independence *vis-à-vis* party politics. As the negotiations spluttered, the CDT and the UGTM held a general strike on 5 June 1996. However, on 1 August 1996, the CDT, the UGTM, the *Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc* (CGEM), and the government signed a joint Declaration for the institutionalisation of social dialogue.[122]

This opening inaugurated a new system of labour institutions, which saw a significant decline in the most severe human rights violations that characterised the Years of Lead. Nonetheless, one of the worst abuses of this period was the kidnapping, torture, and killing of trade unionist Abdallah Mounasser. In the 1990s, Mounasser was the main figure in the drive to organise the Agadir fishermen,[123] who worked under extremely precarious and hard conditions. Yet on 27 May 1997, Mounasser disappeared and four days later his tied-up body was found in the waters of the Agadir Port. The responsibility for the assassination was never legally proved, but Mounasser's family and comrades hold that the involvement of the police is self-evident.[124]

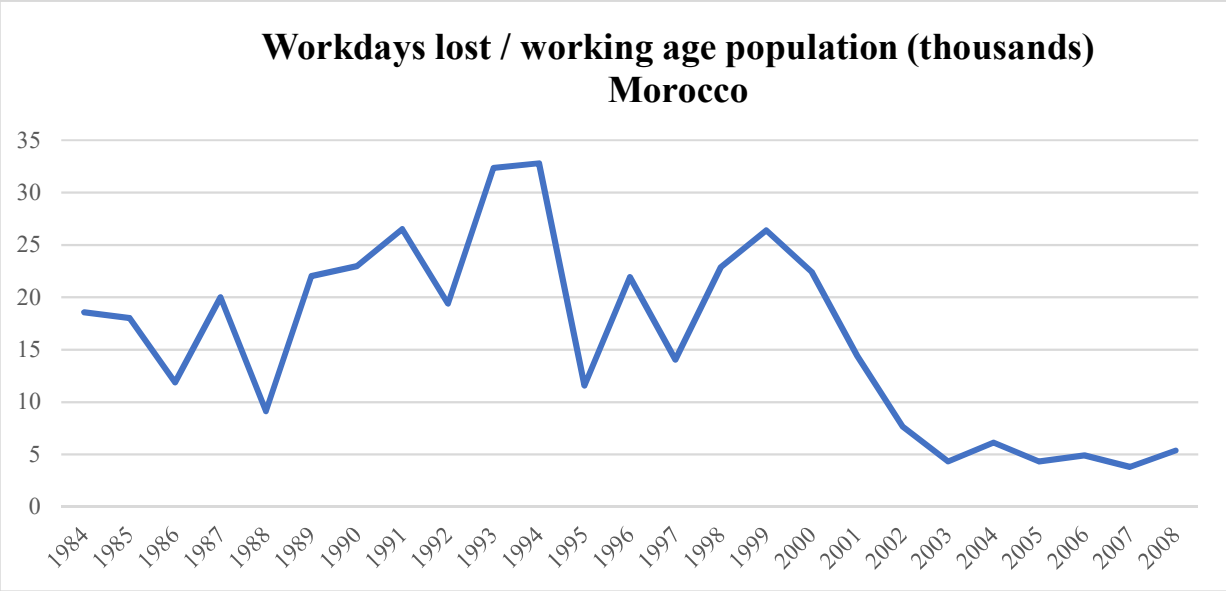
The social dialogue was part of a broader political opening promoted by the Palace, designed to put in place a new institutional configuration that would allow it to control the levers of power despite its concessions to the opposition.[125] On 14 March 1998, Hassan II appointed the so-called "*gouvernement de l'alternance*", led by USFP's Youssoufi. He died on 23 July 1999 and his son Mohammed VI became the new monarch.

The USFP hoped to democratise the country and improve social injustice, but these goals were largely unmet. Despite the signature, on 23 April 2000, of a second

[122] However, as the 1996 Declaration was only partially implemented, on 29 October 1997 the CDT and the UGTM carried out another general strike demanding its application.
[123] Interview 21.
[124] See also the documentary "Mounasser: Marin, syndicaliste et militant ouvrier révolutionnaire" by Miriam Atif, Omar Radi, and Souad Guennoun (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42wEcIZ7C2c&t=38s).
[125] A sign of the times was the participation of the infamous Minister of the Interior Driss Basri in the opening of the CDT 3rd Congress on 14 March 1997.

tripartite Declaration for the reactivation of the conciliation and arbitration commissions, private sector strikes – which had peaked before the beginning of the social dialogue negotiations – reached a new high during the Youssoufi governments before falling throughout the 2000s (see Graph 2).

Graph 2 – Private sector strike activity in Morocco, 1984-2008



Calculated by the author based on ILO and Ministry of Employment data.

The Youssoufi governments coincided with the beginning of the CDT's crisis. The two main causes were the lack of internal democracy and the transposition within the union of the party struggles that accompanied the USFP's failure to implement its governmental programme. The tensions between the CDT and the USFP finally came to a head at the CDT 4th Congress on 14-16 March 2001, where a clear cleavage emerged between the followers of Amaoui and those of Youssoufi. The CDT NEC thus broke the union's ties to the USFP – with Amaoui resigning from the Political Bureau of the party – to create a new party, the *Congrès National Ittihadi* (CNI). The CDT then held two general strikes, on 5 June 2002 and 28 June 2002, while Youssoufi was still PM. However, on 7 April 2003, the USFP faithful, including the majority of the teaching federation, officially exited the CDT and created the *Fédération Démocratique du Travail* (FDT). This was the first in a chain of splits.[126]

[126] The other most important, albeit small, confederation that emerged from the CDT diaspora was the *Organisation Démocratique du Travail* (ODT), which was founded in 2006 and would later ally itself with the *Parti Authenticité et Modernité* (PAM). There were also the *Confédération Générale du Travail* founded in 2014 and the *Fédération des Syndicats Démocratiques* founded in 2016.

The CDT's loss of autonomous power became apparent when the 21 May 2008 general strike for higher wages called by the confederation proved to have little impact (see *La vie éco*, 12 December 2008). The union that had hoped to overcome the shortcomings of the UMT had been weakened in turn. As for the USFP, its electoral weight and political significance continued to decline following the end of the Youssoufi governments.

During the 2000s, the regime further deepened the process of neoliberal restructuring. The unions were particularly concerned by the privatisations of the SOEs and the approval of Morocco's first Labour Code in 2003 (*dahir* 1-03-194 of 11 September 2003). The Labour Code was approved after a series of tripartite consultations that ended with the signature of a third tripartite Declaration on 30 April 2003. This time the declaration was signed by the UMT too, along with the CDT, the FDT, the UGTM, and the UNTM.[127] The Labour Code was apparently a bargain in which the unions accepted the flexibilisation of the formal labour market in exchange for the protection of trade union freedoms and other concessions. Yet, as detailed below, no real general improvement of trade union freedoms was seen on the ground. The UMT Left opposed the privatisations and the Labour Code through statements, meetings, and strikes in some of the firms facing privatisation, but it was unable to significantly alter the process.[128]

The neoliberal phase was characterised by an overall decline in **substantial inducements**. However, due to the fact that in the post-independence phase Morocco had not seen an expansion of substantial inducements comparable to that of the populist regimes, this decline was far less steep. Some welfare sectors, such as social security, probably grew more rapidly in the neoliberal phase than in the post-independence phase.

The neoliberal phase, however, featured a reduction in the legal provisions for job security. The Labour Code confirmed labour subcontracting (Art. 86), legalised temporary work agencies (Art. 477), and formally recognised fixed-term contracts, establishing their maximum duration to two years,[129] after which they become open-

[127] The *Union Nationale du Travail au Maroc* (UNTM) is the labour confederation linked to the Islamist *Parti de la Justice et du Développement* (PJD). Founded in 1973, it started to have a significant national presence with the ascent of the PJD in the 2000s.
[128] Interviews 10, 29, 32, 35, 46.
[129] In the agricultural sector, employers can offer six-month contracts and renew them up to a total duration of two years. In other sectors, the maximum duration of a fixed-term contract is one year, renewable only once.

ended (Art. 16-7).[130] Employment through temporary work agencies can legally last no more than six consecutive months, but it is seen as extremely difficult to regulate.[131] In 2007, the Moroccan Association of Temporary Work Agencies itself declared to the press that:

> In the last two years, over 200 [temporary work] agencies were created and most of them do not declare their workers to the CNSS and do not pay the leave allowances required by the regulations.[132] (*La vie éco*, 27 April 2007)

An additional concession to the employers in the Labour Code was the establishment of fixed criteria for the determination of layoff compensation (Art. 53), but mass layoffs for technological and economic reasons were made conditional to the authorisation of a tripartite local commission (Art. 67-8). *Dahir* 1-11-10 of 18 February 2011 legalised subcontracting in public administration. Finally, another mechanism for legal non-standard employment emerged with the introduction of internship contracts.[133]

Data on wages in the private sector are scant and not necessarily reliable. According to UNIDO data and El Said and Harrigan (2014, p. 110), real wages fell from the early 1980s and subsequently failed to return to their pre-structural adjustment values. The real average daily wage declared to the CNSS – the main national pension fund for the private sector – increased by a yearly average of 1.2% between 2001 and 2010, while real GDP per capita increased by a yearly average of 3.8% over the same period (see Graph 3, p. 115).

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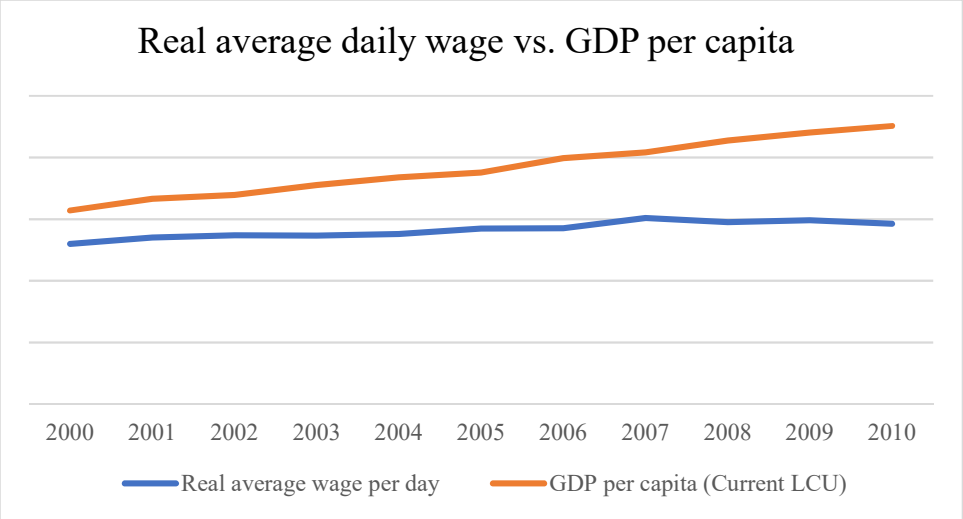
[130] An organic law should have established the sectors in which fixed-term contracts are permitted, but it has never been promulgated and, as such, they are used in all sectors (see *La vie éco*, 26 July 2013).

[131] One should keep in mind that contractual temporary employment is not, quantitatively speaking, an important form of precarious employment in Morocco given the small share of contractual waged employment. In 2010, only 11% of the Moroccan employed population worked under written open-ended contracts (HCP 2011). Between 1999 and 2010, the share of contractual temporary employment doubled, but this merely meant that it passed from 1% to 2% of the employed population (HCP 2000; 2011). In 2010, 1.5% of the employed population worked in waged employment with an "oral contract" and 29% with *no contract at all* (HCP 2011). The remaining absolute majority of the employed population lies outside waged employment altogether.

[132] Translated from French by the author.

[133] The main institution administering them is the *Agence Nationale pour la Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences*, created with *dahir* 1-00-220 of 5 June 2000.

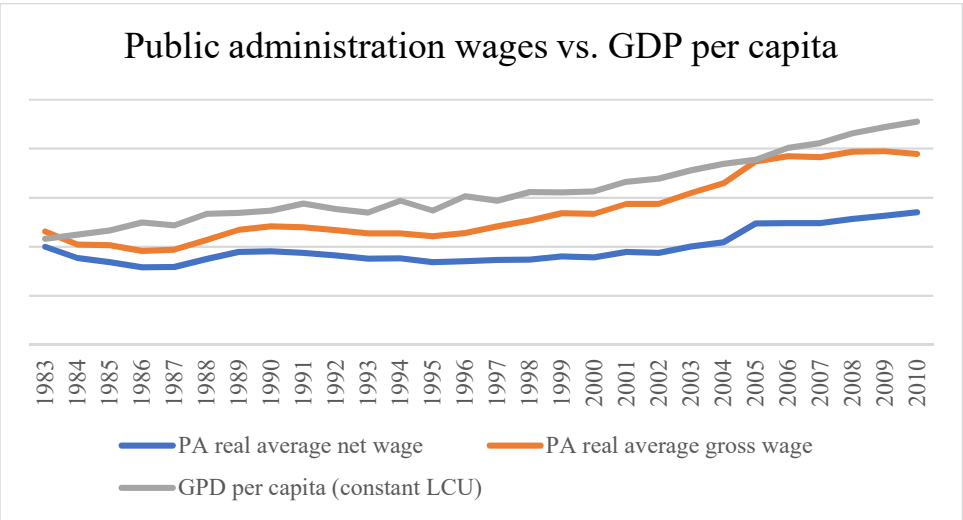
Graph 3 – Real average daily wage declared to the CNSS vs. GDP per capita (Morocco, 2000-2010)



Calculated by the author based on CNSS and WB DataBank data.

In the central public administration, the gross real average wage increased by a yearly average of 2.1% in the 1984-2010 period, while the net wage increased by a yearly average of 1.3%.[134] Over the same period, real GDP per capita increased by a yearly average of 2.9% (see Graph 4). Overall, the available data suggests that average real wages in the formal economy increased, while relative wages decreased.[135]

Graph 4 – Public administration wages vs. GDP per capita (Morocco, 1983-2010)



Calculated by the author based on HCP and WB DataBank data.

[134] Calculated by the author on the basis of Ministry of Finance data.
[135] In Marxist economics, the relative wage refers to the share of wages versus the share of profits in the GDP.

The share of public sector employment diminished. The first privatisations took place in the late 1970s without legal regulation, but Law 39-89 of 1989 established the legal framework for the privatisation of state assets (*dahir* 1-90-01 of 11 April 1990) and the actual sales began in 1993 (see Catusse 2008, pp. 83-125). In 2006, the state had sold 44 firms and 26 hotels (*La vie éco*, 23 June 2006). The government also delegated to the private sector the management of several services, such as water and electricity, communications, and transport. The majority of these assets were sold to foreign investors, but the royal family was the main national beneficiary through the acquisition of control of the *Société Nationale d'Investissement* via the ONA.

Data on employment in the public sector as a whole[136] is available from 1999. At that time, the public sector already accounted for only 10.1% of total employment, which declined to 8.4% in 2010 (HCP).[137] The percentage of SOE employees halved from 1.5% in 1999 to 0.8% in 2010 (*Ibidem*).[138]

According to a governmental report, between 1993 and 2005 welfare expenditure increased from 39% to 50% of the state's budget, not including debt service payments (*Royaume du Maroc* 2006).[139] While the government tried to contain consumption subsidies, it concentrated its efforts on education, health, and social housing (*Royaume du Maroc* 2002). However, public expenditure on education has remained around 5% of GDP from the late 1980s to 2009 (World DataBank).

Concerning poverty relief, the subvention of basic consumption goods persisted as the most important form of state intervention. In 2005, however, Mohammed VI inaugurated the *Initiative Nationale Développement Humain* – a public agency coordinating social development and charity programs with a plethora of local and international NGOs and private firms. Poverty relief, thus, is not framed as a universal social right but as particularistic state-encouraged aid (see Catusse 2010).

Along with poor performances in education, another oft-quoted dark spot of the Moroccan welfare system was its very weak health insurance and retirement coverage. In the late 1990s, health insurance coverage included just 15% of the total

[136] National and local public administration plus the SOEs.
[137] In 2005, the government had launched a programme encouraging early retirement from public administration.
[138] It should be kept in mind that a large share of the privatisations took place in the mid-1990s.
[139] This figure includes the wage expenditure of the relevant ministries.

population (Boudahrain 2000, p. 124), while retirement coverage included only 21% of the active population (*Ibid*., p. 212). Even by 2008, no more than 30% of the employed population had retirement coverage (CNSS 2009, p. 10). In 2002, the government created two new schemes in order to extend health insurance.[140] In parallel, between 1995 and 2010, public health expenditure increased from 1.2% to 2.1% of GDP (UNDP). However, in 2010, only 18% of the employed population enjoyed health insurance coverage (HCP 2011).

Overall, expenditure on the welfare system increased, in contrast with declining legal job security, relative wages, and public sector employment. However, it is necessary to remember that the Moroccan state had never struck a populist social pact with the working class, and, therefore – when it entered structural adjustment – its welfare system started from a lower level compared to the populist states (see Catusse 2010).

The most noticeable trend in **organisational inducements** was that towards rising formal organisational inducements in the form of the partial institutionalisation of tripartite social dialogue (see below). Informal inducements, under the guise of corruption in the manifold forms already enumerated, are still perceived as high for all the trade unions, especially the UMT.[141]

The most significant corruption scandals concerned the relations between the UMT and the "Basri system". Driss Basri was Hassan II's dreaded Minister of the Interior during the Years of Lead. He had placed directors with close personal ties to himself in several public agencies and enterprises (Vermeren 2009, pp. 278-9).[142] These managers used the public resources of such agencies in a clientelist and even criminal manner to boost Basri's power. However, after Mohammed VI dismissed Basri in 1999, the latter's network began to crumble.

The UMT's main link to the Basri system was Mahjoub Ben Seddik's right hand Mohammed Abderrazak. While never convicted, Abderrazak was involved in high-profile public scandals related to the misappropriation of resources from the CNSS (see e.g. *La vie éco*, 15 February 2002 and 14 June 2002) and the *Comité*

[140] The *Assurance Maladie Obligatoire* was funded by social security contributions while the *Régime d'Assistance Médicale* was funded through the state budget in order to cover those who did not have sufficient contributions. The former was activated in 2005 and the latter in 2011.
[141] Interviews 3, 7, 10, 11, 13, 19, 21, 27, 29, 30, 37, 40, 43, 46.
[142] Including the Haddaoui brothers at the *Caisse Nationale du Crédit Agricole* and the CNSS, and Moulay Zine Zahidi at the *Crédit Immobilier Hôtelier*.

d'Oeuvres Sociales of the *Office National d'Électricité* (COS-ONE) (see e.g. *La vie éco*, 2 April 2004; *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 9 December 2004). On 12 March 2004, as the COS-ONE scandal became public, the UMT National Council expelled Abderrazak by the UMT NEC – where he had sat for fifty years – under the pretext that he did not show up to NEC meetings (*Maroc hebdo*, 19 March 2004b).[143]

Other public corruption scandals saw the involvement of the UMT-FNE SG M'hmed Ghayour in the misappropriation of funds from the MGEN (*Al-Hayat*, 29 April 2010; *Tel quel*, 27 April 2018) and the involvement of the *Union Syndicale Inter-Bancaire* (UMT-USIB) SG Farouk Chahir in the misappropriation of funds from the banking national insurance fund (*Akhbar Al-Yaoum*, 21 March 2012).

Another organisational inducement is state funding to the unions. The state transfers money to the unions as a reimbursement for campaigning in the professional elections. The unions also receive state contributions for participating in workers' training programs, national tripartite institutions, and international missions (Labour Code, Art. 424). The Labour Code also stipulates the creation of a national commission in charge of supervising the correct use of this funding, but the commission was never actually brought into existence. In addition to such legal funding, one should add illegal funding tolerated by the state, in so far as the practices of corruption detailed above are not only used for personal enrichment but also to finance the union apparatuses. Another case is, allegedly, the creation of "yellow" workplace unions funded by employers to compete with an authentic workplace union affiliated to a different confederation.[144]

With the constitutional reform of 1996, the House of Councillors was reinstated. As before, a share of its seats was allocated to the most representative unions. At the national level, the status of "most representative union" is given to any confederation that attains at least 6% of representatives in the public and private sector professional elections (Labour Code, Art. 425). This requirement is not as effortless to fulfil as it seems, given the fragmentation of Moroccan trade unionism and the fact that most workers' delegates have no union affiliation. In the 1992 professional elections for the private sector, 50% of the workers' delegates had no union affiliation

[143] It is in any case unlikely that Mahjoub Ben Seddik had never suspected before the shady practices of his vice-SG. After all, as documented in the press, Ben Seddik had himself turned some real estate assets of the UMT into his personal property (*Al-Massae*, 23 February 2012, Appendix, pp. 304-9).
[144] Interviews 7, 10, 18, 19, 21.

(see *Al-Bayane*, 10 January 1993). Commentators at the time already took the result as a sign of the decline of Moroccan trade unionism (*Ibidem*). In 2009, the share of private sector workers' delegates with no union affiliation had soared to 65% (see *La vie éco*, 29 May 2009).

Corruption, informal contacts, state funding, and parliamentary representation already existed in the post-independence phase. However, during the neoliberal phase, bipartite and tripartite bodies that had fallen into disuse during the Years of Lead were revitalised, or new ones were created.[145] Yet these institutions still convened irregularly (see *La vie éco*, 2 February 2007) and they seldom provided a real opportunity for the unions to shape national economic and social policy.

The most important novelty was rather the quasi-institutionalisation of consultative social dialogue. On 24 November 1994, the Council for the Continuation of Social Dialogue was created with the task of establishing a framework for the government to regularly consult the most representative trade unions and employers' associations[146] on public policy. As seen above, the social dialogue was the main tool for the normalisation of the relations between the CDT and the regime. However, in 2008, the CDT itself complained that: "The Council convenes only exceptionally, under the invitation of the King, on the subject of national scale social conflicts. The lack of efficiency of this mechanism explains the recrudescence of labour conflicts" (CDT 2008).[147] Another common complaint is that, as the social dialogue is consultative and is not regulated by legislation, its recommendations are only partially implemented. Surely, the unions do use social dialogue to oppose initiatives that harm their constituencies or their organisations (e.g. containment of public administration

[145] The Central Commission of Prices and Wages and the national and local Workforce Commissions remained inactive. In 1991, the National Council of Youth and Future was created as a response to the unemployed graduates' movement, and the unions were given representation within it. Under the Labour Code, the Higher Council of Collective Agreements was renamed the Council of Collective Bargaining (Art. 101-2) and the Consultative Council of Labour Health became the Council of Labour Health and Prevention of Professional Risks (Art. 332-3). The Labour Code also created the Higher Council for the Promotion of Employment (Art. 522-3) and the Commission for the Application of Norms on Temporary Work (Art. 496). The Higher Council of the Public Administration, created in 1958, convened for the first time in 2000. In 2009, the government started the legislative procedure for the creation of the Economic and Social Council (ESC), a 100-member consultative body mandated by the 1996 Constitution that can advise the government and the parliament on economic and social policy. The trade unions have 24 representatives in the ESC. The Council, however, started to function only after the beginning of the 2011 uprising.

[146] The main employers' association in Morocco is the CGEM.

[147] Translated from French by the author.

wages, the pension reform, the organic laws on strikes and trade unions), but as a leftist trade unionist declared:

> The social dialogue never obtains anything for merely socioeconomic reasons; there are always political motives behind it. In 1996, it was to open the way, on the social and labour side, for the *gouvernement de l'alternance* and the succession to the throne. In 2003, it was a compromise to approve the Labour Code, which contained measures increasing work precariousness and other unfavourable decisions. In 2011, it was the time of the M20Fev. […] But as the situation on the ground is marked by the violation of trade union freedoms and of the right to strike, what social dialogue are we talking about? (Interview 10)

This interpretation is not unworthy, in fact, it is impossible to understand social dialogue in Morocco without analysing the **constraints** under which the trade unions function. As seen above, the trade unions' internal democracy was only indirectly constrained by the regime, through limits on the space for political opposition and the repression of working-class mobilisations. Compared to Hassan II's Years of Lead, these limits decreased significantly under Mohammed VI, but they are far from gone.

Internal democracy in most trade unions remains weak. Due to the limited space for rank-and-file trade unionism (see below), legitimation and funding for the unions come more from the state than from their own members. It is the central leadership of the confederations that participates in social dialogue and that directly receives the external grants, meaning that it can, to some extent, distribute them to the lower levels in a way that reinforces its position.[148] Opportunist trade unionists, moreover, often use the corrupt practices analysed above to boost the incumbent leadership.[149] Many interviewees complained that too often the committees and Congresses, at all levels, do not convene regularly[150] and lamented the informality and lack of due process in the selection of delegates for the Congresses.[151]

[148] Interviews 7, 10, 13, 19.
[149] Interviews 7, 10, 19, 43, 46.
[150] Interviews 19, 24, 37, 40, 41, 46.
[151] Interviews 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 40, 43, 46.

Partisan politics had a role in limiting internal democracy in the CDT, the UGTM, and the FDT, while the UMT's utter disregard for internal regulations continued unabated into the neoliberal phase. This can be easily assessed: between 1995 and 2010 the confederation held no national Congress. Additionally, the UMT NEC could ask the authorities not to recognise the results of lower level Congresses, so that a dissident Executive Committee (EC) would not gain official recognition (see *Al-Massae*, 23 February 2012, Appendix, pp. 304-9).[152] In exceptional cases, the central leadership recurred to direct violence.[153]

A crucial obstacle to the democratisation of Moroccan trade unionism is the repression of rank-and-file activism in the workplace. Morocco's legal framework on the matter is relatively advanced[154] but scarcely applied. While, in the public sector, workers' representation is still regulated by the 1959 legislation with its Joint Administrative Commissions (see above), in the private sector the Labour Code instituted a dual representation system of workers' delegates and union representatives.[155] The Labour Code mandates the recognition of union representatives from the most representative trade unions in all firms with 100 or more employees (Art. 470), and such representatives enjoy the same resources and protections as the workers' delegates (Art. 419 and 472). This norm is, however, problematic in two ways. The vast majority of Moroccan firms are small enterprises[156] (see El Aoufi 2000), meaning that only a tiny minority of workers are covered by the article. Moreover, at firm-level a union reaches the "most representative" status only if it gathers 35% of the votes, which is not easy in practice, given the high fragmentation of Moroccan trade unionism. Therefore, the majority of workplace union representatives are not actually covered by the protections of Articles 470-2. It

[152] Interviews 29, 30.
[153] This happened, for example, with the UMT-FNE of Khemisset. On 19 April 2005, the future UMT SG Miloudi Moukharik had an informal "militia" to invade the premises of the union, which had recently elected a leftist SG, and hold a "Congress" to reinstate the former Local SG (*Al-Massae*, 23 February 2012, Appendix, pp. 304-9).
[154] Article 9 of the Labour Code protects trade union freedoms in the workplace and forbids anti-union discrimination. Article 36 confirms that union membership and activism are not a valid motivation for layoffs and disciplinary measures.
[155] As before, workers' delegates must be present in all firms employing ten or more employees (Art. 430) and they have the right to discuss regularly with the employer individual grievances and summon the Labour Inspection if the grievances cannot be resolved (Art. 432 and 460). Workers' delegates are granted by the employer: office space, a notice board, and paid hours to carry out their duties (Art. 455-6). In addition, an authorisation from the Labour Inspection is necessary for disciplinary actions against them (Art. 457).
[156] In 2010, only 6% of the employed population worked in firms with 50 or more employees (HCP 2011).

is not a case that Morocco has not yet signed ILO's 87 Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise.

In most interviews, as well as in many real-life conversations, the interlocutors stressed the width of the gap between formal rules and realities on the ground. In fact, violations of labour legislation are severe and systematic in much of the private sector.[157] Sometimes they are reported in the public sector too.[158] This exchange between a CDT leader and the author is quite representative of the dominant view among labour activists:

> CDT: What is stronger? A collective agreement or the law?
> LF: The law.
> CDT: So, as in Morocco the laws are not respected, what's the point in having collective agreements if they will not be respected by the employers? The Constitution, the Labour Code, the collective agreements are to no avail. When the employers are strong they apply their own law. This is Morocco. (Interview 4)

There are private sector firms in which workplace unions have a stable presence, especially multinational companies and large Moroccan-owned factories created before the neoliberal phase. But in most cases the employees avoid creating workplace unions, especially militant ones, because a very common reaction to that is the simple firing of the unionised workers.[159] Discrimination in promotions and transfers of militant trade unionists are also often reported.[160]

The interviewees interrogated on the role of the Labour Inspection see it as often ineffective,[161] both because resources and tough legal norms are lacking and because the inspectors are vulnerable to corruption or simply scared to bother an employer

[157] The most frequent violations reported are wage arrears, the non-payment of social security contributions, forced and unpaid overtime, lack of paid holidays, disregard of health and safety norms, lack of due process concerning work accidents, irregularities in dismissals, and violations of trade union freedoms and the right to strike. An extreme example of disregard for labour legislation is the case of the Rosamor furniture factory in Casablanca. On 26 April 2008, the factory caught fire and 55 workers died due to the non-application of the most basic health and safety measures (*Le monde*, 26 April 2008).
[158] Interviews 7, 16, 28, 46.
[159] Interviews 11, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 30, 33, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42.
[160] Interviews 7, 10, 13, 19, 21, 33, 36, 37, 38, 40.
[161] Interviews 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 27, 32, 33, 35, 36, 39, 45.

with powerful connections.[162] Another problem is that, even when the Labour Inspection drafts reports that are favourable to the workers, the courts might not process them, or the sentences might not be enforced (see *La vie éco*, 20 May 2011).

In 2009, because of the efforts of the Ministry of Employment, 10,000 enterprises out of 13,000 eligible held professional elections (*La vie éco*, 29 May 2009). However, the interviewees interrogated on the subject perceive that the workers' delegates usually have scarce leverage over the employer and in many cases the winners of the elections are the candidates supported by the employer.[163] The first point is confirmed in an official ESC report:

> Collective representation through the Enterprise Committees and the Safety and Hygiene Committees remains for the most part purely symbolic and ineffective. The opinions gathered in the interviews point at the limited powers of these organs, at the incompetence of many delegates, and at the excessive distrust towards collective representation by employers and HR managers.[164] (CES 2012)

Unlike union representatives, the workers' delegates do not have the power to sign collective agreements. Yet, as we have seen, officially recognised union representation exists in a very small minority of the private sector. This contributes to explaining the low level of collective bargaining coverage (see Chapter 5), in spite of the fact that the Labour Code encourages it (Art. 92-5).

The Labour Code leaves the regulation of the constitutional right to strike to an organic law, which has not been promulgated until today. In the meantime, Article 288 of the Penal Code (see above) remains unreformed despite the social dialogue engagements to amend it. The application of the right to strike thus still depends on the balance of power on the ground. As there is no organic law regulating strikes, the authorisation of a labour confederation is not legally necessary, but a strike that does

[162] An oft-cited case is that of labour inspector Zine Al-Abidine Kacha from Marrakesh. In 1993, Kacha had drafted a report denouncing irregularities in the mass layoff of a group of bakers who had gone on strike against the dismissal of their union representative and three other workers. Kacha was sued by the employer and, on 8 April 2005, he was sentenced to ten years of prison (*La vie éco*, 15 April 2005). The stunning sentence spurred a campaign for his liberation, including a national strike of the labour inspectors, which prompted the Ministry of Employment to intervene for a retrial (*Le matin*, 29 April 2005).

[163] Interviews 7, 11, 16, 37, 40, 43.

[164] Translated from French by the author.

not have the support of a union is almost certainly doomed to fail. In 2006, 86% of the strikes were backed by a union (*La vie éco*, 18 May 2007). While conciliation is often utilised effectively,[165] arbitration was not actually adopted in this period (*La vie éco*, 24 April 2012).

When a labour conflict is taken to court, the judge can either prioritise Article 14 of the Constitution granting the right to strike or Article 288 of the Penal Code (see above and *Al-Mounadil-a*, 5 July 2015) and Article 39 of the Labour Code (which states that the unjustified refusal to perform one's tasks is punishable with dismissal). Whether backed by a court or not, the dismissal of private sector workers for striking is reported as very common.[166] This means that often private sector workers only join unions or wage strikes when their situation becomes so bad that the risk of losing the job is seen as preferable to continuing under the existing conditions, or when that risk already exists because a mass layoff is in sight. As the Ministry of Employment reported to the press, the majority of strikes were called merely to demand the application of the labour legislation (*La vie éco*, 16 October 2009).

In sum, during the neoliberal phase the most repressive traits of the regime eased but the country's characteristic pattern of informal control remained central. While trying to improve its historically weak welfare system, the regime contained the other kinds of substantial inducements. Civil and political rights increased but, for what concerns the labour movement, their effectiveness was limited by a combination of formal and informal organisational inducements to the unions, the unions' lack of internal democracy, and diffuse state-tolerated disregard for labour rights in the workplace. The resulting loss of union power was widely perceived as a "crisis of trade unionism".

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the struggles that followed independence gave rise to a system of labour institutions – authoritarian conservative pluralism – that differed from the varieties of populist corporatism that characterised the other North African countries. The Palace – and the rural elites that backed it – won the struggle for control of the state against the National Movement, which had both bourgeois and working-

[165] Interviews 8, 9.
[166] Interviews 7, 10, 11, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 28, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38.

class constituencies. The new regime thus marginalised the trade unions and provided a relatively low level of substantial inducements to the working class.

Since the early 1960s, the UMT became gradually more conciliatory towards the regime, despite its political marginality. The confederation thus took a conservative position towards the cycle of struggle that raged in the 1970s, which led to the emergence of the more radical CDT.

However, in the 1990s, faced with continuing social instability, the regime adopted the strategy of a limited political opening, which – through continuing pluralism, party mediation between the unions and the state, and consultative social dialogue – resulted in a more flexible system of labour institutions termed here semi-authoritarian conservative pluralism. Constraints thus partially eased, while some welfare indicators improved. However, the political opening fell well short of democratisation and substantial inducements remained lower compared to Tunisia (see Chapter 5). Yet this process was successful in normalising the relations between the CDT and the regime and encouraged a crisis within the union that eventually resulted in multiple splits. The continuing repression of labour rights in the workplace left the unions with a narrow base and weak internal democracy.

The year 2011 thus found the Moroccan trade unions plagued by a severe lack of legitimacy, a very meagre base of members, and a high dependency on the state for their functioning. This combination of labour weakness and institutional flexibility contributes to explaining why the unions played a limited role in Morocco's 2011 uprisings (see Chapter 6).

Chapter 4 – Tunisia: The Rise and Demise of Authoritarian Populist Corporatism

Introduction

This chapter traces the history of Tunisian labour institutions through the social and class struggles that led to their emergence. After a preliminary sketch of the pre-independence origins of Tunisia's labour movement, the analysis presents a periodisation parallel to that of the preceding chapter. In Tunisia, the post-independence phase can be said to have begun in 1956 and to have finished in the early 1970s, after which there was a long transitional period (1970-85), ridden with heightened social conflict. With the inception of the structural adjustment plan in 1986, the neoliberal phase commenced.

Tunisia's post-independence system of labour institutions can be described as a case of authoritarian populist corporatism, featuring high constraints, relatively high substantial inducements, and a configuration of organisational inducements characterised by a single trade union confederation. The UGTT was incorporated into a triangular state-party-union architecture typical of corporatist regimes, although it maintained a degree of autonomy – the scope of which varied according to the political conjuncture.

During the 1970s, a strike wave led by SOE workers and the entry into the UGTT of intellectual workers who had become radicalised during the student movement put mounting pressure on the union, which resulted in the UGTT NEC staging a national general strike on 26 January 1978. While the strike was repressed and the UGTT leadership imprisoned, the event cracked the regime's corporatist armour as it existed at the time. The struggles of the 1970s resulted in the consolidation of a notable left-wing opposition within the confederation and elements of its top leadership ceased to be a reliable ally of the regime.

During the neoliberal phase, the corporatist system was reconstituted on a new, more informal, basis. Substantial inducements were partially retrenched, such that the system of labour institutions that emerged can be described as "authoritarian post-populist corporatism". Due to the lack of union pluralism and party mediation between

the unions and the state, as well as the narrow incorporation of the UGTT based on tri-annual wage negotiations and informal contacts, this institutional system was more rigid than the Moroccan case. At the same time, larger substantial inducements relative to Morocco made the level of working-class power higher in Tunisia (see Chapter 5). This meant that, in 2011, working-class power was stronger in Tunisia than in Morocco, but it faced a more rigid institutional system, such that the Tunisian trade unionists had to devise their strategies in a context markedly different from the Moroccan one.

4.1 Tunisian Organised Labour in the National Liberation Struggle

This section summarises the genesis of Tunisia's trade unionism in the context of the struggles for independence. From a relatively early stage, Tunisian organised labour participated in the anti-colonial movement through a national union, the UGTT. With the repression of the nationalist party *Neo-Destour* at the hands of the protectorate, the role of the UGTT in the National Movement increased in importance, strengthening its position in the post-independence balance of power.

Similar to Morocco, the first legal union in Tunisia was the local branch of the French CGT and it comprised both foreign and Tunisian workers. The earliest Tunisian-led union appeared in 1924, when Mohamed Ali El Hammi[167] and his associates founded the *Confédération Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (CGTT) (see Haddad 2013). In 1925, however, the French authorities repressed and disbanded the CGTT. A second attempt came in 1937, when Belgacem Gnaoui founded the second CGTT, which was also repressed by colonial powers.

In 1944, under the leadership of Farhat Hached, a number of unions broke away from the CGT out of frustration over the lack of willingness from the French communists and socialists to take Tunisians' grievances seriously, especially the priority they placed on national independence (Ben Hamida 2003; Kraiem 1980). These unions coalesced into the UGTT two years later.

The founding UGTT 1st Congress took place in Tunis on 20 January 1946 and elected Farhat Hached as SG. The union developed three main geographical poles: the

[167] Between 1920 and 1924, El Hammi had studied economics in Berlin, where he had come into contact with the socialist movement in full swing in Germany at the time. With the repression of the CGTT, he was forced into exile and died only three years later in Saudi Arabia, but he would become one of Tunisia's most beloved national heroes.

Sfaxians[168] (the companions of Farhat Hached, who were strong in the transport sector), the Gafsians (who had their base among the miners of the Gafsa basin), and the Tunisans (mainly representing the intellectual workers concentrated in the capital) (see Hamzaoui 2013, pp. 279-81).

Since its beginnings, the UGTT took part in the national liberation movement in alliance with the nationalist *Neo-Destour* Party, led by Habib Bourguiba and Salah Ben Youssef. Typical of colonised countries, class and national struggles and identities became enduringly interwoven (see Chapter 1). With the crackdown of 18 January 1952, as the protectorate utterly repressed the *Neo-Destour* and the *Parti Communiste Tunisien* (PCT), Hached's UGTT partially took the leadership of the National Movement both through mass mobilisations and participation in the armed struggle (Kraiem 1980, pp. 422-7). On 5 December 1952, Hached was assassinated by the extremist colonial organisation *Main Rouge*, linked to the French secret services. The UGTT leadership was thus transferred to the intellectual Mahmoud Messadi. The 1954 UGTT 5th Congress elected the Saheli, Tunis-based intellectual Ahmed Ben Salah as SG, confirming a temporary transfer of leadership from the Sfaxians to the Tunisans.[169]

Thanks to its central contribution to the national liberation struggle, symbolised by the martyrdom of Farhat Hached, the UGTT had become a mighty social force that enjoyed widespread popularity.[170] Its political weight became evident at the 1955 *Neo-Destour* 5th Congress, when the UGTT backed the modernist wing of the party – led by Habib Bourguiba – resulting in the defeat of the more "traditionalist" opposition led by Salah Ben Youssef (Achour 1989, p. 51).

4.2 The Post-Independence Phase: Authoritarian Populist Corporatism

The regime that emerged from the cycle of struggle for national liberation was an instance of authoritarian populist corporatism. The National Movement had marginalised the traditional beylical elite formerly associated to the protectorate. This

[168] More precisely, Hached and several of his companions originated from the Kerkennah Islands in the governorate of Sfax.
[169] Within the Tunisian student movement of the 1970s, this intra-union rivalry between North (Tunis) and South (Sfax and Gafsa) was reinterpreted as a struggle between the would-be state bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy (Naccache 2009, p. 39). In the terminology of this thesis, this is a competition between the two main class fractions constituting the social bases of the UGTT: intellectual workers and secure manual workers.
[170] To this day, this constitutes the main source of legitimisation of its pivotal role in national politics.

balance of power was formalised on 25 July 1957, when hereditary rule was abolished and the republic declared. The main social bases underpinning the new regime were, on the one hand, landowners from the Sahel (North East), the new stratum of state managers, "petty bourgeois" categories such as merchants, professionals, etc. that were linked to Bourguiba's *Neo-Destour*, and, on the other hand, the intellectual and relatively secure manual workers organised by the UGTT. This was an internally hierarchical alliance, with the embryonic "national bourgeoisie" and the state managers competing with one another for hegemony over the other fractions (Ben Romdhane 1985). During this phase, the state conceded high levels of substantial inducements to the working class (populism) and high levels of organisational inducements to the trade union officials (corporatism), in exchange for the UGTT and its constituencies surrendering their political autonomy and therefore remaining subject to high levels of constraints (authoritarianism).

However, unlike in most populist corporatist regimes, the UGTT – while was allied to the state – preserved a certain degree of autonomy, the scope of which varied historically, depending on the political conjuncture (see Hamzaoui 2013). The regime would have liked to impose unilateral control over the single union confederation, turning it into just another monopolistic "national organisation", similar to those created under the *Neo-Destour* initiative.[171] However, the UGTT's autonomous genesis and its pivotal role in the struggle for national liberation empowered its leaders to seek a partnership with the regime on a more equal footing (see Achour 1989). This meant that the consent of the workers organised in the UGTT was always mediated to some extent by the trade union officialdom, which founded its own power on this role as the broker. Moreover, the mediation of the UGTT was probably necessary – geographically speaking – for the Southern regions (see Liauzu 1996, p. 212). In fact, the core of support for the regime was located in the wealthier North-Eastern Sahel (where Bourguiba and many other *Neo-Destour* leaders came from), while the marginalised South, where Ben Youssef's legacy was strongest and the legitimacy of the ruling elite weakest (especially among the former guerrillas), was mainly represented in the state through the Sfaxian and Gafsan UGTT leaders (Hamzaoui

[171] Similar to the *Union Tunisienne de l'Artisanat et du Commerce* (later renamed *Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie du Commerce et de l'Artisanat*, UTICA), the *Union Nationale des Agriculteurs Tunisiens* (later renamed *Union Nationale de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche*), the *Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne*, and the *Union Tunisienne des Organisations de la Jeunesse*.

2013, p. 282). There was thus a certain degree of internal intersection between class and locality.

The alliance between the UGTT and the *Neo-Destour* was consolidated after the 20 March 1956 declaration of independence. That year, the communist-led and CGT-associated *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs de Tunisie* (USTT), led by Hassan Saadaoui, dissolved and invited its members to join the UGTT, which thus became the country's only trade union confederation (Kraiem 1997, p. 357). At the 25 March 1956 elections for the Constituent Assembly, the UGTT presented candidates under the *Neo-Destour*-dominated National Front. The only opposition party, the PCT, won zero seats.

The 1956 UGTT 6th Congress was won again by the left-leaning intellectual Ahmed Ben Salah. The Congress resolutions criticised the liberal economic policy espoused by Bourguiba in its alliance with the Western bloc and proposed a state-led developmental plan. Bourguiba did not tolerate this insubordination and approved the Sfaxian leader Habib Achour's temporary split from the UGTT and the creation of the *Union Tunisienne du Travail* (UTT) (Allouche 2016, p. 69). The split weakened Ben Salah, who was removed from leadership in December 1956 and replaced by the Gafsan *Neo-Destour* treasurer Ahmed Tlili. In 1957, Achour's UTT returned into the UGTT ranks.

Ben Salah's fall from grace did not last long. In 1958, he was appointed Minister of Social Affairs.[172] In 1961, as liberal policy failed to mobilise the necessary investment from the private sector, Ben Salah became the *de facto* head of the government and started to apply the same statist policy that had led to his removal from UGTT leadership.[173] Efforts were concentrated on the development of the industrial sector through the creation of manufacturing SOEs and on the modernisation of agriculture through the expropriation of the foreign settlers' lands (1964) and the establishment of a system of rural "cooperatives" (Ben Romdhane 1985, pp. 267-74).[174] The UGTT was asked to accept wage restraint to provide room for investment.

In September 1962, 6,000 miners went on strike against wage austerity in the

[172] To this day, the Ministry of Social Affairs is the agency most concerned with the relations between the government and the UGTT.
[173] This change in direction was confirmed at the 1964 *Neo-Destour* 7th Congress, in which the party renamed itself the *Parti Socialiste Destourien* (PSD).
[174] These cooperatives had little to do with self-management and were substantially under the control of the state bureaucracy (Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 120).

Gafsa region (Belaïd 1989, p. 201). The strike was not authorised by the UGTT NEC and was eventually repressed by the police. Habib Belaïd notes that:

> A certain psychological break was established by the Gafsan miners, it was the first time in which a conflict opposed the workers on one side and the trade union officials and the Tunisian government on the other side.[175] (Belaïd 1989, p. 201)

In December 1962, a planned coup by a group of Youssefists[176] was discovered (Chouikha and Gobe 2015, p. 15). This gave the upper hand to the *Neo-Destour* to strangle the little political pluralism that existed at the time, the main victim of which was the PCT, which was outlawed in January 1963.[177] The *Neo-Destour* also established its own workplace cells to contain the UGTT's influence in the firms and public administration.

Meanwhile, the government manoeuvred against Ahmed Tlili at the 1963 UGTT 9th Congress, as he had criticised both Bourguiba's tightening grip on the country's political life and Ben Salah's state planning (Moore 1967, p. 661). Habib Achour was thus elected as SG. However, the 1964 *Neo-Destour* 7th Congress mandated that the country's "national organisations", including the UGTT, would be formally transformed, through "coordination committees", into components of the party's structure (Perkins 2014, p. 151). Yet Achour resisted this resolution as he saw that it would undermine the UGTT's margins of autonomy (Achour 1989, pp. 69-73). In the same period, Achour started to publicly criticise wage austerity, particularly during his speech at the 1965 May Day demonstration.

These tensions triggered the first major crisis between the UGTT and the state. In June 1965, Achour was jailed for one month after being accused of mismanagement of a UGTT cooperative of which he was the President (Achour 1989, pp. 80-107). He would be sentenced to six months in prison the following year. This was a manoeuvre to remove him from office. At the July 1965 Extraordinary UGTT 10th Congress, Achour was substituted with party loyalist Bechir Bellagha, the governor of Tunis.

[175] Translated from French by the author.
[176] Followers of Salah Ben Youssef. The latter had been assassinated on 12 August 1961 in Germany, while in exile, by the regime's hitmen.
[177] Hassan Saadaoui, the former USTT SG, was arrested and died in police custody (Bessis 1985, p. 126).

Tlili, meanwhile, fled to Europe to oppose the new course of the union from there.

In the meantime, Ben Salah's "socialism" started to reveal signs of crisis. His attempts to extend the cooperatives system beyond the former colonial lands elicited resistance from landowners and peasants, particularly in the Sahel, where rioting in January 1969 led to police intervention and one death (Anderson 1986, p. 239). Faced with stiff resistance from one of its key constituencies, Bourguiba dismissed Ben Salah[178] the same year and in November 1970 appointed the economic liberal Hedi Nouira as Prime Minister.

During the post-independence phase, **substantial inducements** to the working class came mainly in the form of the rapid expansion of the welfare state, high yearly real wage increases (starting in 1966), expanding public sector employment, and job security.

The Tunisian regime placed a high priority on the expansion of education, adopting a meritocratic rhetoric, according to which hard study was the way for the children of the poor to achieve inter-generational social mobility. In 1956, 85% of the population was illiterate. Between 1956 and 1961, real public expenditure on education grew by 40% (Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 185). Between 1961 and 1969, it increased by 316% (*Ibid.*, p. 189). Healthcare expansion was also quick in the first years of independence, with an increase in state expenditure of 52% between 1956 and 1961, but this decreased to a yearly average of +1.3% between 1961 and 1969 (*Ibid.*, pp. 185 and 189). The social security budget more than doubled between 1961 and 1969 (*Ibid.*, p. 190). In 1965, a system of basic consumption subsidies, later named *Caisse Générale de Compensation*, was established.

Over the whole post-independence phase, while the average yearly rate of GDP per capita growth was 3.2% (1960-1986), the average yearly rate of per capita welfare expenditure growth was 5.7% (*Ibid.*, p. 224).

The average real wage level was contained between 1956 and 1965, as the regime demanded that workers accept wage austerity for the sake of national development. Interestingly, however, wages started to grow more rapidly in 1966, directly following the conflict over wage austerity between Achour and the government. Overall, between 1962 and 1983, the estimated average yearly growth

[178] On 25 May 1970, Ben Salah was sentenced to ten years of hard labour, but he escaped from prison and fled to Algeria in 1973.

rate in real average wages was 6.15% (see Graph 7, p. 147).

The public sector grew rapidly: "[B]etween 1955 and 1960, the number of Muslim public employees rose from twelve thousand to eighty thousand" (Anderson 1986, pp. 235-6). The share of public sector employment most probably increased significantly under Ben Salah's "socialist" government, which oversaw to the creation of many SOEs. In 1980, the public sector still employed 41% of all wage-earners (Zouari 1989, p. 339).[179]

The Tunisian Labour Code was promulgated in 1966 and improved job security in the formal sector by including restrictions on layoffs.[180] Workers could be fired either for serious misconduct (Art. 14) or for economic or technological reasons (Art. 21). All economic and technological layoffs had to be preceded by conciliation with labour inspectors and, if this failed, authorised by an administrative commission including a union representative (Art. 391). If the layoff was approved, the fired workers had to be compensated with one day's wage for every month of seniority in the firm (Art. 22). According to Christopher Alexander:

> [B]ecause administrators worked to minimize layoffs, owners spent weeks or months in tedious negotiations before they could let workers go. During this time, the law required them to continue paying salaries. When administrators did allow owners to dismiss workers, they often ordered them to pay severance indemnities three and four times higher than the amount stipulated in the 1966 code, and if judges ruled that an employer had illegally dismissed workers, they often imposed extremely costly fines. (Alexander 2001, p. 113)

The regime also provided a wide array of **organisational inducements** for trade union officials. The most important were the guarantee of the UGTT's monopoly of workers' representation, membership in party and state decision-making bodies, material and symbolic benefits, and state subsidies to the UGTT in various forms. In this period, the only trade union confederation other than the UGTT – the UTT – was

[179] This was after ten years of efforts to expand the private sector under Hedi Nouira's liberal government.
[180] The Labour Code also obliged employers to notify all offers of permanent employment to the public recruitment offices (Art. 280).

created with the encouragement of the state when a conflict arose between the regime and the UGTT.

In the post-independence phase, there was a significant overlapping of memberships in the single party, the single trade union, and state institutions (see Khiari 2003, pp. 63-8) – resulting in a triangular state-party-union architecture: "A large share, if not the majority, of the union cadres were *Neo-Destour* members and, until the early 1970s, being candidate to a union post required the approval of political officials on the bases of fidelity to the party" (Hamzaoui 2013, p. 27).[181] Members of the UGTT NEC were also members of the *Neo-Destour* Political Bureau and the union participated in the building of the post-colonial state, with many of its cadres taking high-ranking positions in public institutions, including posts as ministers.[182] The UGTT was strongly represented in the Constituent Assembly, and, up to 1986, it officially presented candidates to the parliamentary elections in alliance with the *Neo-Destour*/PSD.

UGTT representatives participated, with mere consultative powers, in the Economic and Social Council (ESC) and in the Higher Council for the Plan, as well as on the boards of the national social security funds and in the Vocational Training Council. On a lower level, the UGTT was granted the right to manage the hiring of casual dockers and of workers in other sectors (Naccache 2009, p. 39) and many directors of public enterprises were appointed from UGTT ranks (Yousfi 2015, p. 37).

Material advantages for trade union officials were both formal and informal. The main formal advantage was the secondment that, as in many other countries, allowed union officials to work full time for the union while keeping their job and the income associated with it. Yet in Tunisia, as in Morocco, it was normally the employer rather than the union itself that continued to pay the wage of the unionist. In most cases, the employer was the state itself.

Informal advantages included a wide array of illicit behaviours made possible by the position of trade union official (both full-time and on the job), especially corruption of various kinds (money, services, priority in access to loans, light workloads, etc.) and clientelist or nepotistic practices in hiring and promotion

[181] Translated from French by the author.
[182] Ahmed Ben Salah, Mahmoud Messadi, Mustapha Filali, Abdallah Farhat, Ahmed Noureddine, among others, were UGTT leaders before becoming ministers (Kraiem 1980, p. 385).

(Hamzaoui 2013, pp. 21-5).[183] Furthermore, with union responsibilities also came some freedom from the employer, contacts with the powerful, travels abroad, offices, etc.

Symbolic advantages consisted in the great prestige associated with UGTT officialdom, rooted once again in the role of the union in the National Movement. The state actively reinforced such symbolism. Until Ben Ali's time, this was exemplified by two annual official ceremonies. Before May Day, the Ministry of Social Affairs selected certain citizens to bestow with Soviet-inspired labour medals "in order to reward the professional conscientiousness and the productivity of wage-earners on their job" (Labour Code, Art. 429).[184] On May Day, the President of the Republic himself handed the labour medals to the winners in an official grand ceremony, and a share of the medals was reserved for UGTT officials. On 5 December, the anniversary of Farhat Hached's assassination, the President participated in a commemorative ceremony together with the UGTT NEC.[185]

State subsidies to the union came in various forms. Since 1958, the state withdrew 1% of public sector employees' wages and transferred it directly to the UGTT as membership fees, which at one point constituted about 80% of the UGTT's total revenue (Zouari 1989, p. 330). This practice was not legally regulated, and it could happen without the spontaneous consent of the workers.[186] Salah Hamzaoui wrote:

> In the 1960s, when I was studying the mines in the South of Tunisia, one of the workers' main demands was that the state stop withholding 1% of their wage to transfer it to the UGTT. The reason was that the union did

[183] Interviews 48, 51, 54, 81, 82, 86, 87, 91.
[184] Translated from French by the author.
[185] Every 4 December, the day before the anniversary, a commemorative demonstration left from the UGTT national HQ and proceeded to Hached's mausoleum in Kasbah square, next to the Prime Ministry (in 2002, for the 50th anniversary of Hached's assassination, Ben Ali ordered the construction of a larger and more prestigious-looking mausoleum). Similar to the May Day demonstration, this public gathering was sometimes an occasion for politicised rank-and-file militants to voice – within varying limits – their discontent at the UGTT NEC's alliance with the regime. On both occasions, then, the partnership between union and state was celebrated in official ceremonies and contested in street marches – an interesting embodiment of the contradictions internal to the UGTT (see Hamzaoui 1999).
[186] A trade union leader explained that, even at the time, it was necessary for the worker to sign an UGTT membership form in order for the state to retain the union dues from his wage. Yet, in the political conjuncture of the 1960s, public sector managers encouraged workers to sign the membership form at the moment of hiring, and it was often difficult for workers to consequently opt out when they realised this entailed a financial cost (Interview 94).

not deserve their membership as it was perfectly aligned to the state.[187] (Hamzaoui 2013, pp. 15-6)

As seen above, the state paid the secondments of full-time trade unionists that came from the public sector.

The UGTT, therefore, depended on the state for the majority of its funds. Union dues from the private sector constituted a minority of the UGTT's budget. Another source of income came from the cooperatives and firms owned by the union – which, according to Achour, employed almost 4,000 workers in the 1960s (Achour 1989, p. 65) – and from rent from its properties.

However, this set of inducements – while certainly having important persuading and moderating effects – did not guarantee the unconditional consent of the UGTT and its constituencies. During this period, union leaders voiced their disagreement with the government on several occasions and some groups of workers engaged in wildcat strikes (Moore 1967, p. 660). When the carrot proved ineffective, the regime resorted to the stick. The main **constraints** were state limitations on the confederation's internal democracy, workplace organisation and representation, collective bargaining, and the right to strike.

As seen above, the party-state was able to manoeuvre successfully against union leaders that questioned its directives. According to Hamzaoui:

> Keeping in mind that the rigging of elections was common practice at the national level, we should not be surprised that this happened also within the union. Until the mid-1970s, notions like that of democracy were so to speak absent. Notions like *patriotism* ("*wataniyya*") were instead the norm. The worth of a militant was determined more by his patriotism, i.e. his political conformism, than by his union representativeness.[188] (Hamzaoui 2013, p. 27)

For instance, when the 1964-65 conflict between Achour and the government broke out, the regime mobilised the single party and the police to escalate the

[187] Translated from French by the author.
[188] Translated from French by the author.

manipulation of local and regional union elections (Achour 1989, pp. 73-9; Moore 1967, p. 661).

In the post-independence phase, a legal framework for workplace representation was established. The 1959 Constitution stated that "trade union rights are guaranteed" (Art. 8) and Law 60-31 from 1960 declared that workers had the right to elect representatives to Enterprise Committees – with control and consulting functions – in firms with 50 or more employees.[189] These representatives had some protection against unfair layoffs.[190]

The 1966 Labour Code confirmed the Enterprise Committees but, by 1977, only 188 Enterprise Committees had been created – the vast majority belonging to large SOEs – and only 38 functioned regularly (Zouari 1989, p. 337). One reason for the weakness of the Enterprise Committees was opposition by trade unionists themselves, who saw them as a threat to workers' representation through the workplace unions (Zghal 1998, p. 13). In fact, the Labour Code did not add anything to the vague constitutional protection of trade union rights and it did not even mention the existence of workplace unions, let alone rights for union representatives to communicate with workers or take leave for union-related matters. The lack of legal protections for workplace unions was aggravated by the fact that, in 1962, the *Neo-Destour* started to create its own workplace cells, with the aim of countering the influence of independent-minded unionists on the workers. An interviewed trade unionist commented on the workplace cells as follows:

> The workplace cells were supposed to control people. And they were into everything that concerns the administration of fringe benefits, they organised trips for the employees and their families and all that. And, above all, they had to be a pro-management counterweight to the union; they had to hand out privileges to the pro-management employees and keep the others under surveillance. (Interview 54)

[189] According to the same law, workers in firms with 20 or more employees could elect a personnel delegate with more limited functions.

[190] If the employer wanted to dismiss an Enterprise Committee representative, she had to ask for the approval of the Committee itself. If approval was denied, the layoff had to be authorised by a labour inspector. If the employer wanted to dismiss the personnel delegate, the layoff had to be authorised by the labour inspector (Law 60-31 of 14 December 1960, Art. 16; 1966 Labour Code, Art. 166).

In sum, union penetration of particular firms depended on the balance of power on the ground, and recalcitrant trade unionists could be victimised without specific legal sanctions (Safi 1989).

Formal collective bargaining in the public sector did not exist and wage-fixing – including the minimum wage – was a unilateral prerogative of the government, the UGTT having only an advisory role in wage commissions (Zouari 1989, p. 336). Although the 1966 Labour Code made provisions for collective agreements to be concluded in the private sector, Article 51 forbade wage bargaining and thus emptied potential negotiations of much of their substance.

The 1966 Labour Code also made the right to strike conditional to mandatory preliminary conciliation (Art. 376) and to the approval of the trade union confederation (Art. 387). This gave great powers to the UGTT high cadres to intervene in workers' struggles initiated from below (see Hamzaoui 2013, pp. 954-74). The UGTT NEC under Bechir Bellagha did not favour militant action, which contributed to the low officially recorded strike levels during this period (see Graph 6, p. 144).

In the "classic" years of the post-independence phase, there were, as seen above, several tensions between the UGTT and the party-state. Nevertheless, the mix of high inducements and constraints was effective in stabilising Tunisia's authoritarian populist corporatist system of labour institutions. The alliance between the UGTT and the regime under the banner of national unity was therefore never credibly threatened. Yet this would change dramatically during the transitional period to the neoliberal phase.

4.3 The Transitional Period: The "Bloody Divorce"

This section shows how the cycle of struggle that ran through Tunisia in the 1970s and early 1980s – while eventually repressed – cracked the corporatist system of labour institutions as it existed at the time. The social bases of this cycle of struggle – mainly constituted by SOE workers and intellectual workers (see Zeghidi 1997) – expressed changes in the technical composition of the Tunisian working class, particularly the expansion of the industrial sector and rising levels of education. The regime initially responded to the crisis by increasing inducements, but – when this proved to be economically unaffordable and politically ineffective – it resorted to escalating constraints.

In 1970, the former Chairman of the Tunisian Central Bank, Hedi Nouira,

became Prime Minister with a mandate to move away from the "socialist" developmental path. With the downfall of Ben Salah, his old enemy Achour had been asked by Bourguiba to return to the post of UGTT SG (Achour 1989, p. 108).[191] Achour's leadership was confirmed at the 1970 UGTT 12th Congress.

During this period, the state maintained a strong role in the economy, but its interventions were more directly geared towards the expansion of the private sector. In 1972, a new Investment Code was promulgated, encouraging foreign direct investment and production for export with a consequent growth of the feminised textile sector. In 1973, a system of national-sectorial collective bargaining between the UGTT and the UTICA was established (see below).

During these years, the main challenge to the party-state came from the radical Left. The origins of the Tunisian New Left must be traced to the milieu of Tunisian students in France, who created, in 1963, the *Groupe d'Études et d'Action Socialiste Tunisien*, which produced a monthly review called *Perspectives pour une Tunisie meilleure* (El Waer 2018). During the 1960s, the "Perspectivists" extended their activities from France to the motherland. Here, their doctrines penetrated a base of students that came in large proportions from the peripheral regions of the country; they were the first generation in their families to have access to higher education.

On 13 March 1968, the student movement launched an open-ended student strike, the central demand being the democratisation of the universities (*Ibidem*). On 20 March, the regime cracked down on the rebellious students, arresting and torturing over two hundred youths and sentencing tens to long prison sentences (Naccache 2009, pp. 97-100). From that moment, *Perspectives* splintered into several Marxist-Leninist[192] and Arab nationalist underground organisations, the most important being *El 'Amel Ettounsi* (The Tunisian Worker) and *Esh'ola* (The Spark).

In August 1971, the New Left won the *Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie* (UGET) 18th Congress in Korba. It was the first major crack in the corporatist system of monopolistic "national organisations" aligned with the regime. The PSD was therefore quick to impose a loyalist NEC in what is remembered as the "Korba

[191] Achour, in return, supported Bourguiba against his rivals at the 1971 PSD 8th Congress in Monastir (Achour 1989, p. 123).

[192] This expression was used as a euphemism for Stalinism and Maoism. Of course – and, in the eyes of the author, quite paradoxically – these doctrines at the time had a wide appeal for rebellious students worldwide. Yet, in any case, these groups usually fought for civil and political rights at least as "tactical goals".

putsch". On 2 February 1972, an Extraordinary Congress was convened at the University of Tunis as part of a leftist initiative to reclaim internal democracy. On 5 February 1972, the police broke into the university and disbanded the Congress. A solidarity strike of university and high school students was launched. On 7 February, the police repressed the demonstrations, making hundreds of arrests (see Chegrouche 1983, pp. 49-50). Apart from the state-controlled 19th Congress in 1977 (*Ibid.*, pp. 52-3), the regime prevented the UGET from holding its Congresses until 1988. In the meantime, the student union continued its activities through "provisional structures" deprived of formal national coordination.

For our purposes, the most important element is that the rebellion expanded from the UGET into the UGTT as the radical students graduated and joined the workforce and the union, bringing with them the same demands of internal democracy and organisational autonomy *vis-à-vis* the regime. The UGTT thus ceased to be a Destourian organisation and became – as it is often said – a "shelter" for all political tendencies. During the 1970s, the Left took over the newly created higher teaching federation[193] and the secondary teaching general union.[194] The newly created banking federation[195] (see Zeghidi 2007), the primary teaching general union,[196] and the PTT federation would follow suit.[197] These changes were, at times, propelled by non-authorised "heroic strikes", such as the secondary teaching strike that took place on 28 January 1975 (*Ibid.*, p. 112).[198]

The political shift in the teaching sectorial organisations signalled the rupture between the most important UGTT federations of intellectual workers and the regime, while up to that point the leading UGTT intellectuals (Messadi, Ben Salah, Kraiem, etc.) had championed the corporatist triangular state-party-union architecture.[199] Hassine Hamza noted that:

> It is this 'multi-functionality' and this 'three-headed configuration' that allows the teachers to take a special and frankly *central* place within the

[193] Interviews 56, 66, 82. Here, the PCT was particularly influential.
[194] Interviews 65, 71, 81, 87.
[195] Interviews 94.
[196] Interviews 72, 73, 75, 79, 88. In the UGTT, the federations and the general unions are both sectorial organisations. However, while the federation groups a set of similar but related professions, the general union only represents one profession.
[197] Interviews 48, 52.
[198] This was the first national sectorial general strike in public administration since independence.
[199] As we will see, the UGTT teaching federations had, in turn, a central role in the 2011 uprising.

> tripolar mechanism state-party-union, that has founded and sustained for a long time the Tunisian political system. […] [Even if there are] relatively recent signs (more or less since the late 1970s) of malfunctioning and therefore of disintegration of this system.[200] (Hamza 1992, p. 229)

Intellectual workers, however, could not have had much weight without a new generation of militant manual workers that rejected wage austerity. Between 1961 and 1982, in fact, the share of primary sector workers declined by one third, while the share of industrial workers increased significantly (see Table 7).

Table 7 – Employment by economic sector (Tunisia, 1961 and 1982)

	1961	**1982**
Primary	45.3%	29.6%
Secondary	24.3%	33.9%
Tertiary	30.4%	36.5%

Calculated by the author based on Ben Chaabane 2014.

These workers, encouraged by the UGTT Left, and mostly without the support of the UGTT NEC, took the lead in the strike wave that swept the country starting in 1971 and reaching its peak in 1977 (see Graph 5, p. 142). The strongholds of industrial militancy were SOEs like Bizerte's ironworks El Fouladh, Sousse's automobile factory STIA, or Gabes's chemical complex (Zeghidi 1997). Strikes in the transport sector were also very common (Zeghidi 1989).[201] The core demands revolved around wages, and indeed real wages grew quickly, surpassing the rate of GDP growth (see Graph 7, p. 147).

In this conjuncture, the fracture between significant sections of the base and of the intermediate structures, on one side, and the UGTT top leadership, on the other side, began to be theorised as a double struggle by the "militants" against both the "trade union bureaucracy" and the regime. Belaïd speaks of:

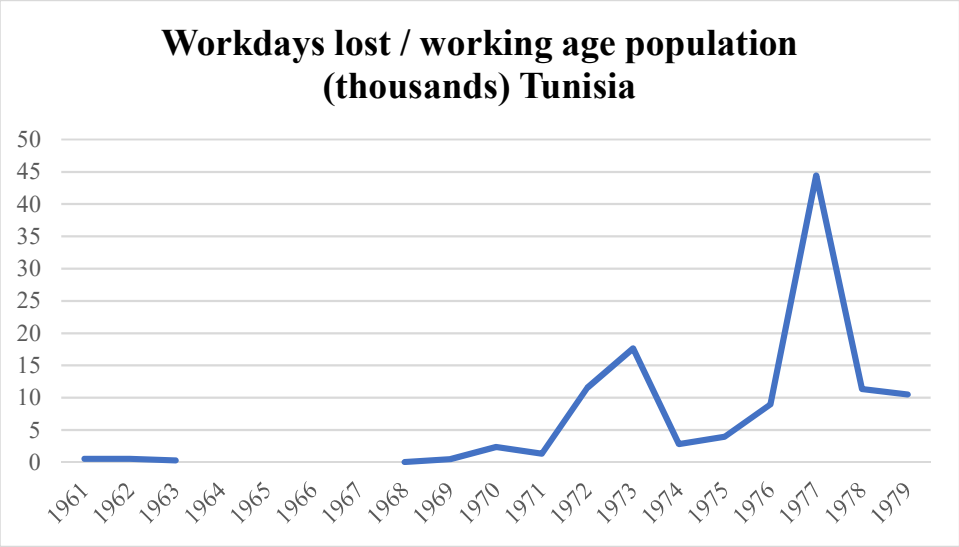
> A "trade union dualism" featuring on the one hand an official trade unionism recognised and controlled by the regime, and on the other hand an "underground" autonomous trade unionism opposing the union

[200] Translated from French by the author.
[201] Interviews 58, 60, 83, 94.

> leadership and the state at once. […] This "trade union dualism" temporarily disappeared when the confluence between official leadership and base was forged in a time of great working-class and trade union mobilisation (from 1976 to 1978).[202] (Belaïd 1989, p. 215)

In this context, the UGTT NEC allowed the radicals into the editorial board of *Esh'aab* (The People), the union's weekly newspaper (Bellin 2002, p. 106). On 19 January 1977, in an attempt to bring strikes under control, the government and the UGTT signed a social pact establishing social peace and a five-year freeze in collective bargaining[203] in exchange for an increase in the minimum wage of 33% and an increase in all wages of a fixed amount corresponding to the value of the minimum wage hike (Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 243). However, dissident union cadres signed the "Petition of the 600", which rejected the social pact (Zeghidi 1989, p. 279), and 1977 was a record year of industrial action, with 452 strikes, involving 88,335 workers, and 140,201 workdays lost (see Graph 5).

Graph 5 – Strike activity in Tunisia, 1961-1979



Calculated by the author based on ILO data.

The PSD, in response, arranged for violent groups, known as "Destourian militias", to attack the union buildings and intimidate independent-minded trade unionists (Allouche 2016, p. 139).

[202] Translated from French by the author.
[203] This meant a freeze of nominal wages, unless inflation reached 5% or more in a semester.

On 10 October 1977, clashes erupted between the police and the striking workers of the textile SOE SOGITEX in the Saheli town Ksar Hellal, which was seen as a stronghold of the single party. The dispute turned into a protracted revolt involving many residents. The unrest lasted until 14 October, at which point the army intervened. At the same time, a major industrial dispute arose that concerned the renewal of the statutes of several SOEs – with the consequent wage increases – which the government refused (Allouche 2016, pp. 138-41). In late 1977, 13,000 miners went on strike, soon followed by thousands of railway workers (Beinin 2016, p. 34). Moreover, the UGTT organised a campaign of rolling strikes to protest the death threats against Achour proffered by Abdallah Ouerdani, an individual close to the party leadership (Achour 1989, p. 182).

The UGTT NEC was thus positioned between portentous rank-and-file assertiveness and increasing harassment by the regime. The matter was further complicated by in-fighting within the PSD, as the struggle to succeed Bourguiba started to mount. These criss-crossing horizontal and vertical conflicts quickly came to a head. On 10 January 1978, after the meeting of the UGTT National Council, Achour resigned from the PSD Political Bureau (Achour 1989, pp. 194-5). The UGTT NEC responded to escalating political and physical attacks by the PSD by declaring a 24-hour national general strike – the first since independence – for 26 January 1978. In what is remembered as "Black Thursday", riots broke out and the police and army intervened. Estimates of the death toll vary between 47 and several hundred (Perkins 2014, p. 168). The General Director of National Security at the time was Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali. The French review *Politique hebdo* described Black Thursday as the "bloody divorce" between union and party-state, reproducing on its cover the photo of a young, long-haired protester bleeding from his head.

In the aftermath, eleven UGTT NEC members out of thirteen were imprisoned, along with hundreds of trade unionists (Achour 1989, pp. 207-45).[204] At the beginning of February 1978, the party loyalist Tijani Abid was appointed UGTT SG. On 25 February 1978, a façade Congress confirmed Abid's post and elected a new NEC

[204] Several of the arrested trade unionists were tortured, including the future UGTT SGs Ismail Sahbani – who at the time was the SG of the national federation of metalworkers – and Abdessalem Jerad – SG of the national transport federation. At least two – Houcine El Kouki and Said Gagui – died in police custody (Achour 1989, pp. 231-6).

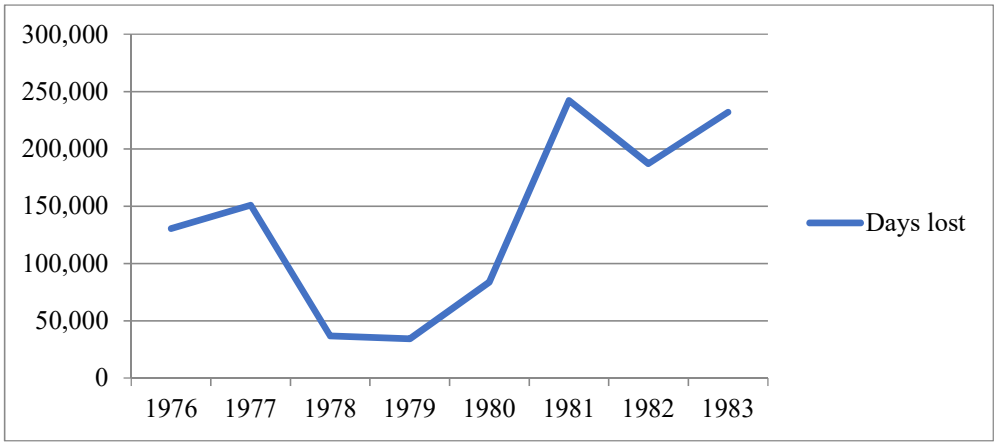
entirely composed of PSD faithful. Both the Achourists and the UGTT Left[205] denounced the new NEC as made of "*fantoches*" (puppets) and demanded the return of Achour and the other "*légitimes*" (legitimate):

> We, the leftist militants, found ourselves in a very peculiar situation during the events of 26 January and the following weeks and months. As the UGTT leadership was almost entirely in prison, we – that up to that point had opposed that leadership together with the regime – found ourselves first in line to defend our legitimate leaders. […] We found ourselves […] acting as some sort of provisional leadership.[206] (Zeghidi 2007, p. 115)

Strikes temporarily declined in 1978-79, but reached new record levels between 1980 and 1984 (see Graph 6).

Outright union repression endured until the regime was forced by social and political instability to allow an UGTT 15th Congress on 29-30 April 1981 in Gafsa, but Bourguiba vetoed Achour's candidacy as SG. Despite the fact that many delegates opposed Bourguiba's veto of Achour, the non-Destourian university professor Taïeb Baccouche was elected SG instead.[207]

Graph 6 – Strike activity in Tunisia, 1976-1983



Data: Ministry of Social Affairs (Bellin 2002, p. 110).

[205] Among the other initiatives, *Esh'ola* kept publishing a clandestine and "legitimate" version of the UGTT's weekly *Esh'aab* (Interviews 75, 82, 94).
[206] Translated from French by the author.
[207] In the 1970s, Baccouche was considered to be close to the PCT. Paradoxically, in the skirmishes between Achour and Baccouche, most radical leftists supported Achour, who – while ideologically and historically closer to the regime – in that political conjuncture was strongly opposed to it (see *Réalités*, 11 December 1982).

In the meantime, the political crisis had continued to develop. On 26 January 1980,[208] an armed commando attempted to initiate an insurrection in Gafsa. In April 1980, Mohamed Mzali took Nouira's place as PM. In January and February 1981, the students rose again, especially in high schools (Abdelali 2012, pp. 39-45). For the first time, the prominent role was taken by the Islamists rather than the leftists. On 6 June 1981, Rached Ghannouchi and his associates founded the *Mouvement Tendance Islamique* (MTI). Fighting between leftist and Islamist students escalated in the universities.

The regime considered the single party regime to no longer be viable: it formally accepted multipartyism and called for fair and free elections to be held on 1 November 1981. However, the elections were rigged, with over 90% of the votes assigned to the PSD-led National Front (Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 196). The UGTT, under Baccouche's leadership, had run again in the National Front and achieved a record 27 MPs (Allouche 2016, pp. 170-1).

In November 1981, Achour returned to formal UGTT leadership, not as SG but as President, a post that did not exist before and that was created to circumvent Bourguiba's veto of him as UGTT SG. In 1983, he obtained the expulsion of seven NEC members who were close to the *Neo-Destour* leadership (*Ibid.*, pp. 182-3). On 18 February 1984, these union leaders founded the *Union Nationale Tunisienne du Travail* (UNTT) led by Abdelaziz Bouraoui. In the December 1984 UGTT 16th Congress, Achour was re-elected SG.

The economic downturn of the early 1980s increased Tunisia's dependency on foreign lenders. The fiscal crisis of the state made the reproduction of populism increasingly difficult by limiting the potential for the state to resort to substantial inducements. At the end of 1983, social tensions exploded again with the attempt to abolish food subsidies as demanded by the international financial institutions. Rioting began on 27 December 1983 and quickly spread throughout the country. It only stopped on 6 January 1984, after Bourguiba announced that the measure had been repealed. The number of victims of state repression was possibly in the thousands (Perkins 2014, p. 173). The UGTT NEC did not play a role in the protests, which were mainly the work of students and the precarious fractions of the working class.[209]

[208] Note that this was the second anniversary of Black Thursday.
[209] The UGTT Left, however, participated in the events and the young poet Fadhel Sassi from the secondary teaching general union was among the victims.

As the government was clearing the ground for structural adjustment, tensions with the UGTT intensified again. In 1985, an escalation of repression hit the union: the secondments and the check-off system for union dues were suspended, workplace union meetings were prohibited, *Esh'aab* was banned for six months, the UGTT's bank account and enterprises were confiscated, the Destourian "militias" attacked and occupied the union buildings countrywide, and over two thousand public administration employees were dismissed or arrested (Allouche 2016, pp. 191-4; Bellin 2002, pp. 112-3). In November, Achour was again placed under house arrest (*Réalités*, 15 November 1985). On 20-21 January 1986, the police invaded the UGTT's last remaining building (rue de Grèce, Tunis)[210] (Allouche 2016, p. 197). The legitimate NEC, who had refused to disavow Achour, was eventually deposed and replaced with party loyalists known as *shourafa* (the honourable ones). Within the same year, the IFI-supervised structural adjustment plan was officially launched, and Tunisia entered its neoliberal phase.

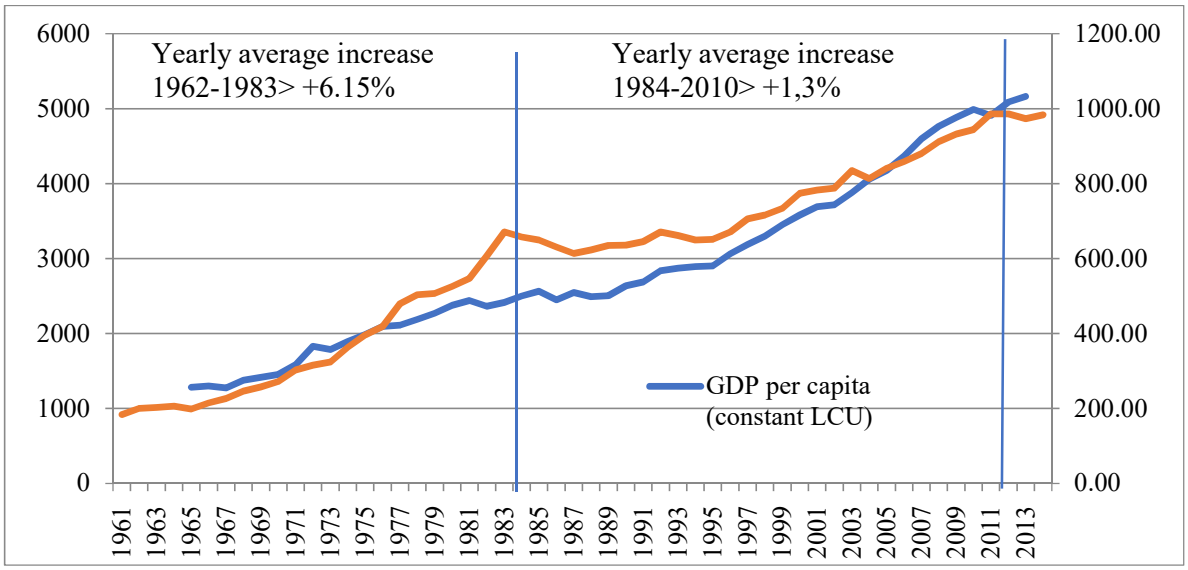
In the transitional period, **substantial inducements** were first escalated to compensate for the political crisis and finally retrenched – amid heavy repression – in response to the economic crisis. Here the most crucial aspect revolved around the struggles over the individual and social wage. Between 1970 and 1980, public expenditure on education grew by 6.4% per year on average (Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 195). Over the same period, the social security budget more than tripled, partly due to the fact that social security was extended to new categories of workers, the largest being agricultural workers (*Ibid.*, p. 194). Between 1970 and 1984, public expenditure on health grew by 10% per year on average (*Ibid.*, pp. 195 and 200). Yet the most spectacular expenditure increase was in the form of consumption subsidies, which, in the 1970-1980 period, rose by 1,660% (*Ibid.*, pp. 194-5).

The average real wage also exploded. Between 1971 and 1984, it increased by 117%, despite the slowdown in its growth that corresponded with the repression of 1978-79 (see Graph 7, p. 147). During most of this period, the real average wage

[210] Across Tunisia, the UGTT premises are highly symbolic because public demonstrations often start from there. Most symbolic of all is Mohamed Ali El Hammi square – colloquially known as the "Batha" – the space outside the national HQ in Tunis. This space was used by the NEC to call for sit-ins and give speeches, as well as by the UGTT Left to vent its frustration at the official leadership. Many central and dramatic events in the history of the country happened here, examples of which include: in the early 1970s the radical students criticising Achour's policy of compromise clashed with the "UGTT militia", in January 1978 the police surrounded the HQ to prevent the demonstrations from leaving, on 14 January 2011 the demonstration against Ben Ali started from there, and in December 2012 the HQ were stormed by pro-government protesters.

growth rate exceeded the per capita GDP growth rate. Furthermore, these increases in the average wage were accompanied by a reduction in wage dispersion (Zouari 1989).

Graph 7 – Real wages and GPD per capita growth (Tunisia, 1961-2013)



Calculated by the author based on Ben Chaabane 2014 and WB Databank data.

At this moment of labour strength, which, among other things, boosted Achour's political aspirations, **organisational inducements** also proved to be ineffective. It was the union itself that dismantled the triangular state-party-union architecture under rank-and-file and left-wing pressure. As seen above, the most iconic fissure appeared in January 1978 when Achour resigned from the PSD Political Bureau. The politically weak Mzali, after becoming PM, sought a compromise with the UGTT by allowing the 15th Congress to proceed, but his attempts to win the trade union's loyalty failed and he would soon turn to support the Islamists instead. In 1982, in fact, the UGTT refused to lend legitimacy to the new five-year plan by boycotting the consultations and, in 1983, it withdrew from the ESC (Bellin 2002, p. 111). State retaliation commenced in 1984-85, when most organisational inducements were suspended. In 1977-78 and 1984-86, the government temporarily ended the UGTT's monopoly by recognising and encouraging the *Mouvement Force Ouvrière Tunisienne* and the UNTT respectively.

Constraints were then the last resort of the regime and, while they were relaxed in the first Nouira years, they were then deployed with increasing determination. As explained above, state interference in trade union democracy was

blatant. This did not only come directly in the form of the removal of the legitimate NEC in 1978 and 1985-86 but also indirectly when the NEC itself cracked down on those trade unionists that refused to abide by its policies of relative compromise.

The main tool of inside repression was the Internal Regulation Commission, charged with examining and sanctioning members suspected of breaching the UGTT's internal regulation. Another tool was the Financial Control Commission, in charge of supervising the use of the UGTT's funds. The SG, the Secretary of Internal Regulation, and the Secretary of Finances thus controlled the most important engines of what union militants call the "machine" of "trade union bureaucracy".[211] The "machine" could dissolve lower-level ECs or warn, suspend, or expel a union member, and loyalty to the NEC was often an important criterion in the decision.[212] The suspension of union membership, known in the union jargon as *tajrid* (ouster), was often a *de facto* green light for direct state repression (including intimidation, workplace transfers, layoffs, military service in remote areas, and arrests), a practice that would continue to exist during Ben Ali's reign.[213] The so-called "UGTT militia", a body of union stewards from the loyal sectors (like dockers or transport workers), acted to support internal repression, as they were used on several occasions to quell union dissidents.[214]

An example of internal repression can be found in the 1975 secondary teaching general strike. In the aftermath, Achour annihilated the federation's EC and simply substituted it with a more pliant one. Indeed, the epithet "puppets" that would soon be used to refer to the illegitimate trade unionists that usurped the Achourists' place in the NEC was first used to designate the secondary teaching EC manoeuvred by Achour himself (Zeghidi 2007, pp. 112-3). At the same time, several unionists were transferred to remote regions or fired.

For what concerns collective bargaining, the initial surge in wildcat strikes put a strain on unilateral wage determination by the state and, in 1973, the government, the UGTT, and the UTICA established a system of national-sectorial negotiations for the non-agricultural private sector. This signals that the regime was willing to recognise some level of stable trade union penetration in the private sector.

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[211] Interviews 50, 54, 65, 82, 87, 91.

[212] Achour himself writes that the "deviation from the principles of the UGTT" (translated from French by the author) was a sufficient reason for disciplinary measures to be taken (Achour 1989, p. 149 and p. 160).

[213] Interviews 54, 63, 65, 66, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 81, 82, 86, 87, 94.

[214] Interviews 48, 50, 65, 66, 82. In the early 1970s, the "UGTT militia" was also deployed to confront Tunisia's student movement (Hamzaoui 2013, p. 30; Naccache 2009, pp. 152-3).

On 20 March 1973, the UGTT and the UTICA signed a Frame Collective Agreement (FCA), establishing the general conditions for the national-sectorial agreements that would then be applied to all employers and employees of a given sector, regardless of membership in the signatory organisations.[215] The wages and conditions of the SOE workers were determined either by the statute of the enterprise or, if this was absent, by the relevant private sector national-sectorial agreement (Zouari 1989, p. 331). Collective bargaining was not institutionalised for public administration and for the setting of the minimum wage, although the UGTT had some influence in both domains (*Ibid.*, pp. 331-3).[216]

Between 1974 and 1977, 39 sectorial agreements were signed (*Ibid.*, p. 332). The presidency and the government probably had a significant influence over the outcome of the negotiations. Nevertheless, this was the most advanced collective bargaining system in North Africa (which remains true to this day). The collective agreements contained several improvements in working conditions, on top of the wage increases. However, collective bargaining was suppressed between 1978 and 1980, and once again in 1985.

In respect to workers' representation, the 1973 FCA established a new workplace representation body, the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC), for all firms with 20 or more employees (Art. 39-42). Some of the tasks of the JCC overlapped with those of the Enterprise Committee, but its specific function was that of monitoring the application of the national-sectorial collective agreements. The FCA also improved the recognition of trade union rights in the workplace (Art. 5), stating explicitly that workers were free to join the legal trade unions (there was only one, of course) and that they could not be discriminated against for being union members. The employer or manager also had to provide a notice board for union communications and to meet the union representatives at least once a month. As shown above, however, anti-union discrimination reached gigantic proportions during the years of repression, despite the FCA.

While in the early 1970s the government expanded most labour rights, it restricted the right to strike since the beginning of the transitional period. The 1973 amendments to the Labour Code (Law 73-78 of 8 December 1973) augmented prison

[215] See the Minister of Social Affairs' ordinance (*arrêté*) of 29 May 1973.
[216] The union, for example, negotiated with the government a new statute for public administration workers promulgated as decree 75-355 of 3 June 1975 and the new firm-level statutes of SOE workers.

terms for the instigators of illegal strikes (Art. 388) and facilitated the requisition of workers that by striking threatened a "vital interest of the nation" (Art. 389-90). The 1976 amendments to the Labour Code (Law 76-84 of 11 August 1976) mandated a 40-day warning for a strike to be considered legal (Art. 376 bis), which was soon corrected to a 10-day warning.[217] Strikers were on several occasions prosecuted by the authorities or harassed by the Destourian "militias" (Achour 1989; Belaïd 1989, pp. 207-14).

During the transitional period, class struggles in Tunisia were unable to prevent neoliberal restructuring, which – as a global trend – was unlikely to be reversed by events taking place in a small, marginal country. These struggles, however, dismantled the triangular state-party-union architecture as it had existed – a remarkable achievement that did not obtain in the other Arab populist countries. This outcome had important long-term consequences in that it posed limits on how the corporatist alliance between union and party-state could be reconstituted in the neoliberal phase and it left significant space for manoeuvre to the UGTT Left.

4.4 The Neoliberal Phase: Authoritarian Post-Populist Corporatism

In the neoliberal phase, authoritarian corporatism was rebuilt in a new, post-populist form. While substantial inducements to the workers were gradually retrenched and the regime was opened to a greater extent to international capital and Ben Ali's crony capitalist clique (*post-populism*), high levels of organisational inducements were maintained (*corporatism*) – although informal inducements gained in relative importance – and high levels of constraints also persisted (*authoritarianism*). The informalisation of organisational inducements can be interpreted as a ploy made necessary by former struggles. In fact, after the "bloody divorce" of 1978, the formal interpenetration of state, party, and union posts was no longer viable and had to be substituted with less explicit and visible clientelist relations.

It is important to note, however, that the social and individual wages kept increasing, but at a slower pace relative to the post-independence phase. *Retrenchment of these substantial inducements, then, did not mean an absolute loss but rather a decline in their pace of growth relative to the post-independence phase*. This dynamic signified both a suspension of the post-independence populist social pact and a

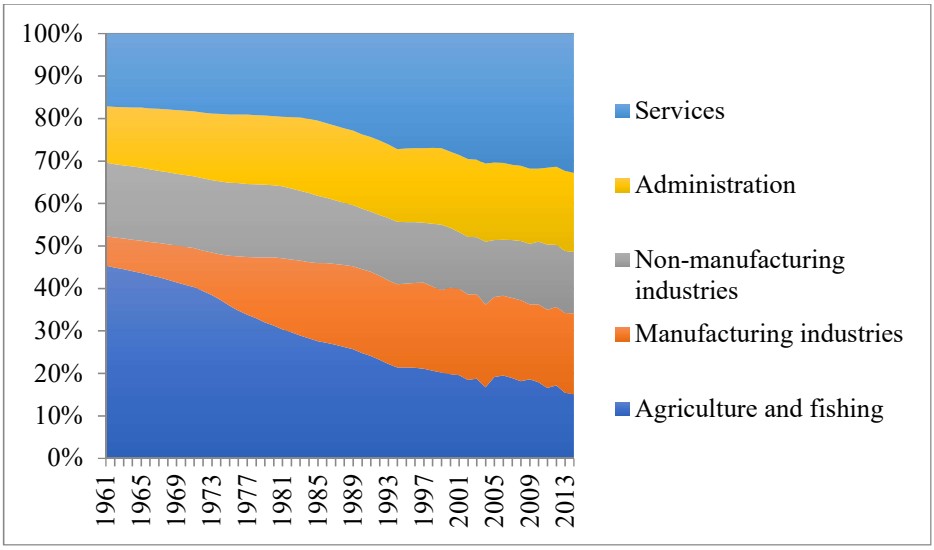
[217] See the correction (*rectificatif*) of 20 August 1976.

continuing increase in some dimensions of working-class power (see Chapter 5). The contradiction between the conservation and the stiffening of a rigid authoritarian corporatist system of labour institutions, on the one hand, and social change, particularly the suspension of the populist social pact and increased working-class power, on the other hand, contributed to the demise of this system in an abrupt and insurrectional manner.

The retrenchment of substantial inducements also signified a suspension of the post-independence trend towards rapidly expanding job security, as shown in the changing technical composition of the Tunisian working class. Employment in manufacturing stopped growing quantitatively (see Graph 8)[218] and changed qualitatively. Relatively secure employment in the SOEs declined, and precarious employment in private sector light manufacturing for export increased.

Employment in public administration grew from 13% of total employment in 1961 to 17-18% in the mid 1980s, after which it remained at the same level until the uprising. As employment in industry and public administration stagnated, the burden of expanding employment opportunities fell entirely on the shoulders of the private service sector. To a larger extent than in Western countries, most new employment in services meant a wide and fragmented array of deskilled jobs in highly precarious conditions.

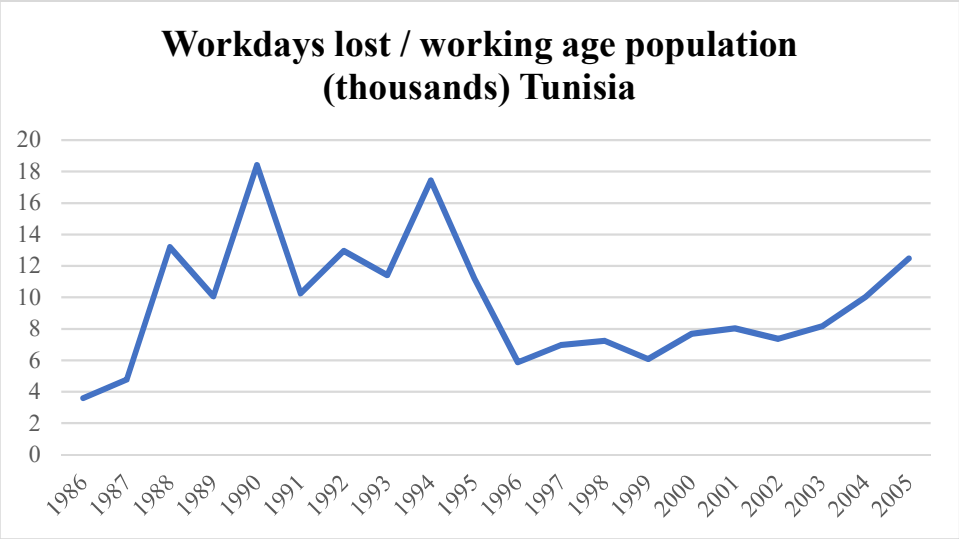
Graph 8 – Total employment by economic sector (Tunisia, 1961-2014)



Calculated by the author based on Ben Chaabane 2014.

[218] However, it remained higher than in Morocco (see Chapter 5).

Graph 9 – Strike activity in Tunisia, 1986-2005



Calculated by the author based on ILO data.

Between 1985 and 1988, the regime survived on sheer labour repression: the UGTT NEC was sequestered by the *shourafa*, collective bargaining was suspended, and trade union militants were kept out of public administration or transferred to remote areas. However, the continuing rise of the Islamists, on the one hand, and persistent wildcat strikes against the effects of the restructuring (see Graph 9), on the other, made this arrangement difficult to sustain (see also Alexander 1996a).

Interior Minister Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali became PM on 2 October 1987 and President of the Republic on 7 November 1987 as a result of the so-called "medical coup", in which a team of doctors declared Bourguiba "psychophysically" unfit to rule. Ben Ali initially consolidated his power by promising nothing short of democratisation, as stated in his 7 November 1987 Declaration. This promise was reiterated in the 7 November 1988 National Pact, signed by all the main civil society organisations (including the UGTT) and political parties of the country, from the PCT to the Islamist MTI (Chouikha and Gobe 2015, p. 49). Only the radical Left refused to cooperate.[219]

The promise of democratisation, however, was soon revealed to be hollow. In the April 1989 elections, the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD)[220] won all parliamentary seats and Ben Ali was elected as President with 100% of the

[219] In the meantime, most of *El 'Amel Ettounsi* had become the *Parti Communiste des Ouvriers de Tunisie* (PCOT) and *Esh'ola* had further splintered into several tendencies, the largest ones collectively known as the Democratic Patriots (*Watad*).
[220] In 1988, the PSD changed its name to *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique*.

votes (unsurprisingly, as he was the only candidate). The Islamist party *Ennahda* (ex-MTI) was denied legal recognition altogether and would soon be harshly repressed (Perkins 2014, pp. 195-6). As Ben Ali decided not to compromise with the Islamists, he had to find a social basis elsewhere, and the easiest solution was to reconstitute the corporatist alliance with the UGTT (see also Khiari 2003, pp. 68-74), which had been dismantled with the repression that characterised Bourguiba's last years.

In 1988, Ben Ali appointed a National Labour Commission in charge of overseeing new elections in the UGTT's base and intermediate levels, in view of preparing the UGTT 17th Congress. In the process, the trade unionists that had been imprisoned, laid off, transferred, or suspended from the union were reinstated. The UGTT assets that the state had confiscated were returned to the union.

The 17th UGTT Congress was held on 17-19 April 1989 in Sousse. In the lead-up to the Congress, the National Labour Commission had collaborated with the regime to contain the number of leftist and Islamist delegates (Alexander 1996a, pp. 264-5). The two main contenders were both Achourists with a history of militancy and imprisonment during the 1970s and early 1980s. Ali Romdhane was a Sfaxian civil servant and a former SG of the agricultural federation[221] who ran on a platform of alliance with the Islamists present within the union (Zeghidi 1997, pp. 54-5). Ismail Sahbani was a former metal worker from the Bizerte region, SG of the metal workers' federation, and the candidate backed by the regime. Most of the Left supported Sahbani, fearing that Ali Romdhane would open the way for *Ennahda* to take control of the UGTT (*Ibidem*). In any case, the people interviewed for this thesis and other observers were unanimous in arguing that the Congress was an unequal compromise that was heavily influenced by the regime:

> The Tunisian regime had its strategists; it had its own interpretation of the union and political landscape. They knew very well that within the UGTT the Achourists are not homogeneous. Ali Romdhane is Achour's cousin, he's a Kerkennian, an engineer, more or less an intellectual, but his defect was that he was a bit close to the Islamists. […] Sahbani had assembled a broad coalition with the Destourians and the Left, because the regime had managed to demonise Ali Romdhane. He used to be called Ali Sistani, like

[221] The agricultural federation organises more Ministry of Agriculture employees than agricultural labourers.

> the imam of Najaf.[222] […] Sahbani was rotten, he was a crook and an ignorant, and everybody knows that. And he was just a puppet in the hands of Ben Ali, he did everything he could to quell any form of militancy within the UGTT, all forms of dissent. (Interview 82)

The regime wanted to maintain a leadership at the top of the UGTT that would deliver organised societal support to Ben Ali without opposing neoliberal restructuring. Indeed, the UGTT NEC signed a declaration of support for Ben Ali before every presidential election and Sahbani abandoned substantial opposition to structural adjustment. In 1993, the parliament approved a new Investment Code that increased incentives for foreign investors. For what concerns the UGTT, the most painful and controversial measure was the reform of the Labour Code that occurred in two rounds, in 1994 and 1996 (see below).

However, acceptance of neoliberal reforms, coupled with escalating authoritarianism and corruption in the management of the UGTT, undermined Sahbani's grip on the organisation. An interviewed trade unionist stated:

> It was Sahbani who gave the UGTT to Ben Ali, for its own economic interests, a lot of money. The regime let him do what he pleased, and this has been proven. Sahbani was chased away because he was totally corrupt and because he accepted the erasure of past achievements. Before we used to have the Enterprise Committees, but they were substituted with the Enterprise Joint Commissions. The difference is that the Enterprise Committees could intervene with the boss even in the strategy of the firm. And many other things in the Labour Code, like the fact that you can't have a permanent job before four years of employment and that the bosses can outsource the workers. If he stayed any longer there would be no UGTT by now. He used to work directly with the Interior Ministry, if a trade unionist bothered him he took up the phone and said: "Hey, he's a fundamentalist". (Interview 53)

In September 2000, Sahbani was removed from his post of UGTT SG and, in

[222] Ali Sistani is a highly influential Iranian Islamic cleric based in Iraq.

2001, was sentenced to thirteen years in prison on misappropriation charges (*Le monde*, 26 June 2001). One possible reason is that, during an interview in the USA in December 1999, Sahbani did not contradict a journalist who suggested he could become the future President of Tunisia (*Business news*, 31 January 2012). Yet a deeper cause could be that Sahbani – despite being re-elected SG for the third time at the UGTT 19th Congress in 1999 – had increasingly lost legitimacy in the eyes of large sections of the base and the intermediate structures:

> Rage in society was starting to mount and the trade union confederation could not take Sahbani's style of leadership anymore. The regime started to fear that – if things were left like that – it might be caught by surprise by some major social explosion, which could get out of hand, become politicised, and threaten its security. So they thought it best to change, to try to postpone and channel [discontent]… (Interview 57)

Militants refused to defend Sahbani and actually cooperated in the plot to dismiss him (see Hamzaoui 2013, pp. 1280-98).[223] Sahbani was provisionally replaced by the long-time Secretary of Internal Regulation – and Achour's former right hand – Abdessalem Jerad, the Sfaxian former SG of the transport federation.

Jerad's leadership was confirmed at the Extraordinary 20th Congress that took place on 7-9 February 2002 in Djerba. The main opposition was led by Ali Romdhane and the Marxist Salah Zeghidi[224] with their "Trade Union Platform for the Rehabilitation of the UGTT". Ali Romdhane and two of his associates were integrated into the NEC, while Zeghidi and his followers broke away to form a more confrontational third list that won no seats (Gobe 2002). In a move reminiscent of Ben Ali's, Jerad began his mandate with the promise to end the union dictatorship that had characterised Sahbani's time. Taking advantage of this favourable conjuncture, the UGTT Left won the approval of a new Article 10 of the internal regulation, establishing a two-term limit for permanence in the UGTT NEC. Article 10 would later become a highly symbolic point of contention in the struggle for internal democracy.

[223] Interviews 53, 57, 75, 88.
[224] Zeghidi was the former SG of the banking federation.

In the neoliberal phase, the most important change in labour institutions was the gradual retrenchment of the **substantial inducements** that had characterised the post-independence phase. This is mainly seen in the flexibilisation of the formal labour market, the decline in the share of public employment, and the great slowdown in the rate of increase of real wages and welfare expenditure.

A new form of precarious work was introduced with the creation of a legal framework for internships.[225] Furthermore, a law establishing Special Economic Zones was approved, stating that in such zones all contracts were fixed-term (Law 92-81 of 3 August 1992, Art. 23).[226] While labour outsourcing had always existed in the private sector, in the 1990s it became more diffuse and it started to hit the public sector heavily too (King 2013).

After the 1996 reform of the Labour Code (Law 96-62 of 15 July 1996), Article 6-4 specifies a list of situations in which fixed-term contracts can be used,[227] but then states that fixed-term contracts can be adopted *in other cases* for no longer than four years, after which the worker must receive an open-ended contract. In line with the global trend, this provided the legal framework for the diffusion of formal precarious employment across the economy. Workers on fixed-term contracts faced likely dismissal after the four-year period and found it virtually impossible to join workplace unions that were not directed by management (Gondino 2015, p. 114).[228] It is thus very unlikely that the more stringent procedures for economic and technological layoffs (Labour Code, Art. 21) compensated for such losses in job security.

In respect to public sector employment, between 1987 and 2010, 219 SOEs were privatised (ITCEQ 2010, p. 29). Outsourcing and automation also reduced the number of workers in the remaining SOEs. Total public sector employment (public administration plus the SOEs) declined from 41% of wage-earners in 1980 (Zouari 1989, p. 339) to no more than 32% of wage-earners (and possibly less than that) in 2010.[229]

If during the post-independence phase the yearly average increase in the

[225] See Decree 87-1190 of 26 August 1987 and Decree 87-715 of 31 March 1988.
[226] Two Special Economic Zones would be created, one in Bizerte and the other in Zarzis.
[227] The start-up of a new firm, a peak in demand, the replacement of an absent worker, emergency work, and seasonal work.
[228] Interviews 53, 62.
[229] Calculated by the author with data from the IMF (2014, p. 13). However, data from Tunisia's INS are different. For example, according to the IMF, the Tunisian public administration employed 615,000 wage-earners in 2012, while the INS places their number at 533,000 – a significant divergence.

average real wage was 6.15% (1962-1983), in the neoliberal phase this figure was reduced to 1.3% (1984-2011) (see Graph 7, p. 147). Moreover, as a study commissioned by the UGTT lamented, the share of the net wage bill in GDP fell from 33% in 1983 to 26% in 2001, signalling a decline of relative wages (Bédoui and Mkaddem 2006, p. 123).

This trend in individual wages was paralleled by a slowdown in the increase in the social wage, especially for what concerns healthcare and poverty relief. Between 1987 and 2007, the average yearly increase in healthcare expenditure was a modest 1.4%, less than half the average per capita GDP growth (Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 211). Regarding poverty relief, the government gradually diminished consumption subsidies and substituted them with targeted cash transfers and other forms of aid to low-income families (*Ibid.*, p. 217). As Mahmoud Ben Romdhane noted, while consumption subsidies are universal and therefore unconditional, targeted transfers are amenable to all kinds of clientelist practices geared towards political control (*Ibid.*, pp. 231-40). Indeed, the lists of the households eligible for aid were compiled by loyalist RCD members who would exclude troublemakers and ensure the submission of the recipients. Poverty relief had thus become the main tool in the hands of the regime to regulate the precarious fractions of the working class.[230]

The two sectors of welfare in which the state maintained a strong performance were education and social security.[231] Between 1987 and 2007, public expenditure on social security grew from 3.5% of GDP to 6.8% (*Ibid.*, p. 219). In the same period, the average growth in education expenditure was about 6.5% (*Ibid.*, p. 210). The number of high school and university graduates increased massively (see Table 8), although this came at the cost of a fall in their average educational achievement.

Table 8 – Population aged over 10 by educational level (Tunisia, 1966, 1980 and 2011)

	1966	**1980**	**2011**
Nothing	67.5%	48.3%	18.4%
Primary	27.3%	37.3%	32.8%
Secondary	3.8%	13.0%	36.6%
University	0.6%	1.4%	12.3%

Calculated by the author based on INS 1973, INS 1981, and INS 2013.

[230] It is interesting to note that, with the 2008 financial crisis, food prices underwent sudden spikes in 2008 and 2010, for which the cash transfers were unable to compensate.

[231] However, even in this best performing domain, one should note that unemployment insurance did not exist, which left workers hit by precarisation very vulnerable to the vagaries of the labour market.

Tunisia's policy-makers possibly thought that keeping the young in education for longer could be a palliative for youth unemployment. However, as it turned out, this was hardly a recipe for political stability. In fact, while the public sector was contracting, investment in the private sector was too weak to create suitable employment for the new graduates. Even according to official statistics, between 1994 and 2011, the unemployment rate for university graduates jumped from 4% (INS 1995) to 29.9% (INS 2013).[232]

In the post-independence phase, the average yearly GDP per capita growth was 3.2% and the average yearly growth in per capita welfare expenditure was 5.7% (1960-1986) (see Table 9). In the neoliberal phase, while GDP per capita growth maintained the same pace overall, the growth of the social wage stabilised at 3.2% – and excluding increases in social security expenditures it stood at just 1.6%.

Table 9 – Per capita GDP growth and welfare expenditures, constant prices (Tunisia)

	Average yearly per capita GDP growth	Average yearly per capita growth in welfare expenditures	Average yearly per capita growth in welfare expenditures without social security
1960-1986	3.2%	5.7%	5.6%
1987-2010	3.2%	3.2%	1.6%

Ben Romdhane 2011, p. 224.

The available figures confirm that a retrenchment of the populist social pact took place, but – for what concerns wages and welfare – this took the form of a significant slowdown in increases relative to the post-independence phase, rather than an absolute loss. Furthermore, disaffection was aggravated by the cronyism and clientelism typical of post-populist regimes in the region, in blatant contradiction with the meritocratic rhetoric that had been central in Bourguiba's discourse.

In the neoliberal phase, **organisational inducements** to the UGTT featured some important elements of continuity. The 1% wage check-off system was not restored, and union dues were reduced to a lower monthly fixed amount.[233] Yet the

[232] It should be remembered, however, that someone is socially considered an unemployed graduate even if she is working, as long as the conditions that characterise her job fall below what is normally held to be the appropriate minimum for the level of education she has attained.

[233] In 2015, the union card cost 2 TDn per month in the public sector and 1 TDn per month in the private sector. Considering that the national minimum wage was 290 TDn per month, it is clear that the cost of membership became less than 1% of the wage (as it used to be).

state still directly transferred to the UGTT the dues of those public sector wage-earners that declared their will to join the union. The UGTT's monopoly of workers' representation, its participation in the peak tripartite bodies,[234] and state-funded secondments were all maintained. In addition, the CNSS directly transferred a certain sum of money to the UGTT every year. [235]

However, the struggles of the 1970s had demolished the triangular state-party-union architecture as it had previously existed. This was formalised on 30 November-1 December 1981, when the UGTT National Council forbade trade unionists from holding authority posts in the union and the party at the same time (*Jeune Afrique*, 9 December 1981). Formal and publicly visible intersections between union, on the one hand, and party-state, on the other, were thus reduced. However, this was compensated by informal patron-client relations, only perceivable through word of mouth or sudden scandals (often engineered by the corruptors themselves to marginalise the corrupted who had started to bother them).

As discussed above, corruption within the UGTT had always existed, as it did in many trade unions the world over. It is impossible to ascertain whether the level of actual corruption increased or decreased over the decades, but perceived corruption seems to have augmented. On this matter, Béatrice Hibou wrote:

> The perception of an increase in corruption also unveils a transformation in the modes of governance and in the rules of social life. Without a doubt, corruption has augmented quantitatively less than it has undergone a change in its role and meaning: it is today much more intrusive, and more political too, it works as an important *dispositif* of voluntary serfdom.[236] (Hibou 2006, pp. 340-1)

Indeed, vigorous denunciations of the corruption of the "union bureaucracy" are recurrent in most of the interviews collected, and this was the evaluation of an internal opposition current:

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[234] In 1988, the Higher Council for the Plan was renamed Higher Council for Development.
[235] According to Ben Romdhane (2011, p. 245), in 2005 the UGTT had a budget of almost 10 million TDn. 5.1 million dinars in union dues were collected by the state from public sector workers, 2.4 million dinars were provided by the CNSS, 310,000 dinars were gifts from private firms and organisations, and only 626,000 dinars were union dues collected directly from workers by the UGTT.
[236] Translated from French by the author.

> Clientelism has spread along with opportunism, through the systematic exploitation of the membership fees and the revenues of its [the UGTT's] economic institutions, based on adulation and personal, tribal, and regional allegiances.[237] (RSDM 2010a, see Chapter 7)

State actors and employers systematically provided opportunist union leaders with patronage for themselves and for seeking the allegiance of lower-level unionists and workers.[238] This did not only buy the recipients' loyalty but was also a tool for blackmail in case they started to show less gratitude down the line. The trajectory of Sahbani himself is the perfect illustration of this, but – according to the interviews collected – the system was much more capillary than that. As reported on the wake of Sahbani's demise:

> [H]e [Sahbani] tried by any means to place his men in all regional unions, workplace unions, and national sectorial federations. The "manipulations by these accomplices", as reported by a trade union official, were realised through bonuses, improvements in wages and conditions, company cars, fuel vouchers, trips abroad, and protection of the union rank-and-file in case of conflict.[239] (*Réalités*, 21 September 2000)

An important informal advantage for loyalist trade unionists was the possibility to solve problems and gain advantages for their base, thanks to intervention from above by party-state officials, rather than through autonomous mobilisation from below. As an oppositional trade unionist explained:

> It's remarkable and somewhat paradoxical that, at the time, there was a parallel between the UGTT and the state. Because it was the state, Ben Ali, that intervened to solve all problems just like the UGTT NEC did. […] So the NEC intervened directly with the presidential cabinet, the governors, or the ministers […], sometimes in very dodgy ways. Like, there is a struggle in a given sector to solve whatever problem. [A member

[237] Translated from Arabic by Inel Tarfa and the author.
[238] Interviews 48, 50, 54, 59, 65, 81, 87, 91.
[239] Translated from French by the author.

> of the NEC] can call the Minister and say: "Leave the problem as it is, until those unionists are forced to come here and ask me to intervene". And there you go, then he's the boss, he can solve the problems that the others were unable to sort out. (Interview 87)

At peak level, this meant a strict relationship between the UGTT SG and the President himself:

> Ben Ali, he's a clever wolf, he wanted to keep Sahbani on his side. […] So he gave him some strength; when there was a deadlock in a given sector, Sahbani used to go to Ben Ali to sort out the problem. […] Solutions were in the Carthage Palace [the presidential palace]. […] It was a policy to put in people's minds that all problems will be sorted out by Ben Ali. (Interview 75)

This easy access to state authorities (most importantly on the occasion of national-sectorial collective bargaining), together with the traditional prestige associated with UGTT leadership, is behind the widespread opinion that the UGTT NEC members "were like ministers". These informal relations compensated for the weakness of formal incorporating institutions.[240] A crucial formal incorporating mechanism, however, were the tri-annual national and national-sectorial collective bargaining rounds (see below).

High **constraints** were a prominent feature of the neoliberal phase. Tunisia's human rights record remained appalling, and the state continued to limit trade union democracy, the right to strike, collective bargaining, and workplace organisation and representation.

Reportedly, after Sahbani's ousting, outright fraud in the UGTT's internal elections became increasingly difficult to commit. However, even before this, the "bureaucracy" preferred to respect electoral formalities as much as possible in order to bolster its legitimacy. According to the UGTT internal regulation of the time, only

[240] For example, Decree 2000-1990 of 12 September 2000 approved the creation of the National Council of Social Dialogue, but it never actually came into existence.

the workplace unions could send delegates to the national Congresses.[241] The "machine", therefore, had to try to persuade, directly or through the intermediate structures, with reasoning or by offering advantages, the workplace unions to send pliant Congress delegates.[242] When this failed, the national leaders could use the Internal Regulation and the Financial Control Commissions to attempt to remove the troublemaking rank-and-file members from their posts, or they could push the base (sometimes with the help of the employer or even the police, or simply by offering some advantages) to request a no-confidence vote or to elect "moderate" union representatives the next time.[243] A rank-and-file trade unionist explained:

> I'll give you an example of the collaboration between the [union] bureaucracy and the RCD. Say I'm a dissident and I'm bound for being elected as union representative. My boss calls me and says: "If you run as a candidate we'll take away some of your benefits" or "We'll transfer you to some other area". Behind this, there is some union official who wants to prevent me from being elected. (Interview 54)

Other techniques were, for example, gerrymandering or the creation of yellow workplace unions in agreement with the employers, sometimes inflating the official number of their members.[244] When simple manipulation did not work, the "union bureaucracy" collaborated with the state security and judicial apparatuses and with the employers to crack down on dissent.[245]

For what concerns the right to strike, the legislation remained unchanged. According to Christopher Alexander, the UGTT NEC was the first to support the status quo (Alexander 2001, pp. 116-7), as the requirement that all strikes be approved by

[241] Some trade unionists suggest that this rule reflected Farhat Hached's strong democratic principles. However, the UGTT 23rd Congress of 2017 resolved to extend the right to send Congress delegates to intermediate structures.
[242] Interviews 48, 50, 75, 78, 82, 91.
[243] Interviews 50, 53, 54, 57, 62, 71, 72, 75, 79, 82, 91.
[244] Electoral manipulation was allegedly more severe in the private sector, where workers are easier to blackmail, or in wealthy but low-skilled public sectors, such as mining and chemicals. Conversely, manipulation was harder to carry out in most public administration federations, where the workforce was more educated and politicised (Interviews 79, 81, 87, 82, 91).
[245] Interviews 48, 54, 24, 71, 82, 91. The following is a notable example: in 1997, when some trade unionists circulated a petition asking for transparency in the financial management of the UGTT, the NEC denounced them to the authorities and four of them spent one month in prison (Hamzaoui 2013, p. 1287).

the confederation to be considered legal gave the central leadership great powers over the rank-and-file. As a union representative of an electronics factory complained:

> [The rank-and-file unionists from the Fouchana industrial estate] thoroughly supported us, but they can't take decisions alone. Many of them told us: "We're ready to launch a solidarity strike, the workers in our factories will stand by your side". But they couldn't do it because the problem in Tunisia is that the rank-and-file can't issue a strike notice; it's the Regional EC or the NEC who does that. (Interview 62)

One success of Ben Ali's regime in its quest for social peace was the stabilisation of national and national-sectorial collective bargaining. The collective agreements lasted for a fixed time of three years and were always renewed on time. For the private sector, the UGTT and the UTICA negotiated an inter-sectorial national level "*accord cadre*",[246] establishing the issues to be discussed in the national-sectorial negotiations. On these bases, the sectorial federations of the "most representative organisations" (which for labour obviously meant the UGTT in all sectors) negotiated 51 national-sectorial collective agreements over wages and conditions.[247] Further bargaining could take place at firm level, but only if it was geared towards an improvement of the wage levels and conditions already established by the national-sectorial agreement.[248]

It is not easy to assess the extent to which the state constrained the process and the outcomes of the negotiations. The discourse of the Ministry of Social Affairs is that its role was merely that of facilitator, consultant, and guarantor of legality.[249] On the contrary, critical trade unionists charge that it was "just a show" – that technocrats studied beforehand a suggested range of wage increases and the presidency intervened in cases of recalcitrance by the social partners.[250] These claims are reinforced by the fact that the employers had similar complaints (Cammett 2007, pp. 122-3). A plausible

[246] Not to be confused with the 1973 FCA, which was reformed in 1984, 1992, and 2004, and contained more general guidelines valid beyond the three-year period of the national-sectorial collective agreements.
[247] The national-sectorial bargaining normally took place in March and April, so that the signature was celebrated on May Day under the banners of social peace and national unity.
[248] Firm-level agreements, however, were not very widespread in the private sector. In fact, in 2008, just roughly twenty firm-level agreements existed (UGTT 2008).
[249] Interviews 59, 64.
[250] Interviews 53, 55, 91.

conclusion is that the negotiations left some real space for manoeuvre – as suggested by the fact that strikes did take place and that on some occasions the social partners failed to meet the May Day deadline – but that this space was limited by the political and economic priorities of the regime.[251]

Concerning workplace organisation and representation, the 1992 FCA revision expanded the protections for trade unionists established in the 1973 version. Anti-union behaviour, however, remained widespread in the private sector,[252] although the UGTT managed to build a solid and stable presence in many large enterprises (see Chapter 5). In fact, as the state had given the UGTT the role of negotiator for the private sector at the national level, it had to allow for a certain level of union penetration in private companies to preserve the credibility of this role.

With the 1994 Labour Code reform (Laws 94-29 of 21 February 1994), the Enterprise Committee and the Joint Consultative Commission were fused into a single representational body called the Enterprise Joint Commission (EJC), to be established in every firm with 40 workers or more.[253] In 2010, the actual coverage rate of EJCs and personnel delegates was 42% of eligible firms.[254] The EJC's functions were similar to those of the Enterprise Committee, but while the 1966 Labour Code stated that the latter had to be consulted "in order to be progressively associated to the management and development of the firm" (Art. 161),[255] the wording of the new version made no reference to co-management.

To sum up, authoritarian corporatism became "cheaper", perceivably more clientelist, and remained repressive. The co-optation of the union "machine" through the continuation and informalisation of organisational inducements was accompanied by the repression of internal dissidents and the retrenchment of substantial inducements to the workers. The limitations on trade union democracy suppressed the feedback mechanisms that could have allowed the base to voice their grievances over the diminishing quality of their socioeconomic rights through institutionalised outlets. There was no exit option either, since the state was determined to enforce the UGTT's monopoly of workers' representation to avoid the emergence of more radical

[251] Interestingly, even some trade unionists said that the presidency used to intervene more often in favour of the workers, especially in the most fragile sectors, in order to guarantee social peace (Interviews 53, 93).
[252] Interviews 53, 62, 84, 90, 92.
[253] Firms employing between 20 and 40 workers retained the right to elect one personnel delegate.
[254] Calculated by the author using MAS 2014 and INS 2016b.
[255] Translated from French by the author.

competitors.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed how class struggles transformed Tunisia's labour institutions from the post-independence phase to the neoliberal one. When the Tunisian movement for independence entered its decisive stages, the UGTT already existed as an established national organisation and it was thus able to play a central role in such struggles. This reinforced its position in the post-independence balance of power, allowing it to influence to a significant extent the nature of the regime that emerged out of the anti-colonial struggles.

The relatively secure workers, through the UGTT, were incorporated in the social bases of the new regime, and this was institutionalised through an authoritarian populist corporatist system of labour institutions, characterised by high constraints (including the partial submission of the UGTT to the party-state), relatively high substantial inducements to the working class, and a system of organisational inducements based on a single trade union integrated into a triangular state-party-union architecture.

Tunisia's path of state-led development brought about significant changes in its working-class composition, the most important being increasing levels of education and a great expansion of industrial employment. Industrial workers and intellectual workers were the protagonists of the cycle of struggle that, through a strike wave mainly over wage levels, cracked the triangular state-party-union corporatist architecture by pressuring the UGTT leadership to distance itself from the *Neo-Destour*, as epitomised by the 26 January 1978 national general strike. While these struggles ended in defeat, they had long-standing consequences. In fact, they partially contained the neoliberal retrenchment of substantial inducements, established a solid leftist anti-regime presence within the UGTT, and rendered its top leadership a less reliable ally of the regime. In fact, Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser estimated that the UGTT was the "weakest link" in the regime's chain (Camau and Geisser 2003, pp. 220-6).

In the neoliberal phase, Ben Ali reconstituted – in a new form – the corporatist arrangement that had been dismantled by the utter repression of labour in 1985-86. The resulting system of labour institutions can be called authoritarian post-populist corporatism. Constraints remained high, as shown by the regime's renewed crackdown

on civil and political rights, meddling in union democracy, and limitations on labour rights. Substantial inducements were retrenched, but for the individual and the social wage this means that they grew at a much slower rate relative to the post-independence phase, not that they decreased in absolute terms. Organisational inducements were still based on a single trade union arrangement, but the relations between the UGTT and the party-state became more informal relative to the post-independence phase, and patrimonial practices took on a prominent role.

Authoritarian post-populist corporatism was a rigid system of labour institutions because – barring party mediation between labour and the state and union pluralism, and limiting the incorporation of the UGTT into wage negotiations and clientelism – it suppressed the feedback mechanisms that could have channelled workers' discontent into institutionalised outlets. At the same time, working-class power in Tunisia remained relatively high for the standards of the region (see Chapter 5).

As shown in Chapter 7, this state of affairs sharpened the "trade union dualism" that had emerged in the 1970s, with a deepening polarisation between the upholders of a policy of compromise, who commanded the union "machine" with its capillary patron-client network, and the politicised dissident trade unionists, who controlled some intermediate structures and had a significant following among segments of the base. The latter, notwithstanding the many internal grey areas of compromises and inconsistencies, developed an identity as "militants" struggling against both the "union bureaucracy" and the regime. The battle for democracy was raging within the UGTT itself, with important effects on the complex role of the union during the 2011 uprising.

Chapter 5 – Comparing Trade Unionism and Working-Class Power in Morocco and Tunisia

Introduction

This chapter compares trade unionism and working-class power in Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 Arab uprisings (see also Feltrin 2018a). The first section provides a picture of the presence and organisation of the trade unions in the two countries, as well as their relations with political parties and civil society organisations. The second section maps the relations of the trade unions with two types of marginalised workers: female workers and precarious workers. Finally, the last two sections discuss technical composition and working-class structural power, on the one hand, and political composition and working-class associational power, on the other.

The analysis demonstrates that the level of working-class power was higher in Tunisia than in Morocco, in both its structural and associational dimensions. As illustrated in the previous chapters, these different levels of working-class power were the contingent results of successive historical rounds of social and particularly class struggles.

This divergence in working-class power meant that, during the 2011 uprisings themselves, the mobilised Tunisian workers had more resources to push the UGTT to take up their grievances, and that the UGTT itself could mobilise more resources in this direction. To the contrary, in Morocco, the mobilised workers could exercise a weaker pressure on the trade unions, which themselves had less power to take radical actions in solidarity with the protests. The trade union leaderships behaved in contingent and unforeseeable ways, but they needed to take into account this different balance of power in their decisions.

5.1 Trade Unionism in Morocco and Tunisia on the Eve of the Uprisings

This section presents a comparison of trade unionism in Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 Arab uprisings, focusing on the presence and organisation of the unions and on their relationships with political parties and civil society organisations. While the UGTT was a central actor in Tunisian political and associational life, the

Moroccan trade unions – while relevant – occupied a less preponderant position.

In the 2000s, the three largest Moroccan confederations were – in decreasing order – the UMT, the CDT, and the FDT. The UMT still maintained its historical status as Morocco's largest union, as indicated by the results of the professional elections. This is due to its long-standing dominance in the private sector and in some public agencies (especially the CNSS, the ONE, and the OFPPT)[256] and to the power bases created by the UMT Left – starting in the 1990s – in teaching (UMT-FNE), agriculture (UMT-FNSA), and the local administrations (UMT-FNOFCL). These last three federations were in turn part of the umbrella federation *Union Syndicale des Fonctionnaires* (UMT-USF), which was also revitalised by the leftists in 2001.

As the UMT is the oldest union, its dominance in the private sector is partially due to its presence in historical national firms. Its critics also claim that, because of its good relations with the CGEM, the UMT is often the confederation of choice for the creation of employer-sponsored unions.[257] As seen above, in the 1960s the UMT renounced the multi-employer private sector national federations, except for the UMT-USIB in banking. The private sector agricultural unions have been grouped, since 1991, in the UMT-FNSA, along with the Ministry of Agriculture employees and other public sector agricultural unions (see Hakech 2013). The private sector agricultural workplace unions are now particularly numerous in the Souss-Massa region, which has an important concentration of foreign and national firms producing for export.[258] Most of the remaining UMT private sector workplace unions are not affiliated with any national sectorial multi-employer federation, and are thus organised in the framework of their local or regional unions.

Historically, the most important area for manufacturing in Morocco was the Casablanca-Kenitra axis. Since the foundation of the Tangier Free Zone, in 1999, and the opening of the Tanger-Med cargo port, in 2007, the Tangier region has seen an increase in industrial employment and unrest,[259] although unionisation remains low at around 5% (LO-FTF 2015, p. 19).

The UMT traditional leadership has its stronghold in Casablanca, while the UMT Left used to control the regional union of Rabat-Salé-Témara with Khadija

[256] Interview 6, 19, 44.
[257] Interviews 19, 21, 32.
[258] Interviews 19, 24, 29, 35, 47.
[259] Interviews 37, 38, 39, 41, 43.

Ghamiri as Regional SG. An interviewee observed that: "There were actually two UMTs, the 'UMT-Casa' and the 'UMT-Rabat'…".[260] The UMT Left had also managed to gain a prominent presence in some local unions, such as Taza, Khemisset, Khouribga, and Al Hoceima. Outside of public administration, the Rabat UMT had been working with manufacturing workers in the industrial estates of Rabat, Salé, and Kenitra, especially in the textile sector, which underwent severe difficulties in facing international competition. In fact, the share of textile workers in the employed population decreased from 6.9% in 1999 to 4.9% in 2010,[261] and many textile workers countrywide faced restructurings or closures without receiving legal severance pay.[262]

Different from the UMT, the CDT and the FDT were dominant in public administration. Among the CDT's strongest federations there were the *Syndicat National de la Poste* (CDT-SNP) and the *Syndicat National de la Santé Publique* (CDT-SNSP), while the FDT, before its internal crisis, was especially present in education through the *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement* (FDT-SNE) and in the Ministry of Justice through the *Syndicat Démocratique de la Justice* (FDT-SDJ). The CDT also had an important presence in the publicly-owned phosphate mining company OCP and in the formerly publicly-owned oil refinery SAMIR.[263] Morocco's academics are organised in a separate union called *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (SNESup), founded in 1960 and historically close to the UNFP/USFP.

In Tunisia, in the 2000s, the single trade union arrangement was still enforced by the regime, meaning that the UGTT was the only labour confederation in the country. In 2007, Gabes Regional SG Habib Guiza tried to break away from the UGTT and found a new confederation, but the state refused to lend it legal recognition. According to an internal survey, in 2006 the UGTT's union representatives were 39.2% manual workers, 20.7% clerks, 28% middle management, and 12% senior management (UGTT 2006, p. 20). This meant that a sizeable share of UGTT cadres

[260] Interview 29.
[261] Calculated by the author based on HCP data.
[262] A salient example of major breaches in the labour legislation was that of Somitex, a textile factory in Salé that produced for British retail companies, including Marks & Spencer and Tesco. In March 2004, three months after the employees had founded an UMT workplace union, the company fired around fifty workers, including all union representatives. On 7 April, their colleagues held a strike to demand their reinstatement, but the company responded by firing 145 more workers with severance pay below the legal minimum (ILO 2005).
[263] However, after being privatised in 1997, SAMIR initially downsized its personnel and finally went bankrupt.

fell outside of the working class as defined in this thesis, because they participated significantly in the management of the means of production (see Chapter 2). In the same year, 69% of the workplace union representatives were employed in the public sector and 31% in the private sector (*Ibid.*, p. 20). While this indicates that the public sector was over-represented relative to the overall class composition, these are remarkable figures considering the regional standards of union penetration in the private sector.

The UGTT's workplace unions are its basic organisational unit and they had great importance because they were the only level that could send delegates to the National Congresses.[264] They were grouped geographically in the local and regional unions and sectorially in the federations or general unions. The sectorial organisations were in turn structured on a local, regional, and national level. The highest decision-making body was the National Congress, which normally convened every five years. Second in the hierarchy was the National Council, which was composed of the NEC plus the ECs of the regional unions and the national federations and general unions; it normally convened every two years. The third body was the National Administrative Commission, composed of the NEC members and of the SGs of the regional unions and national federations and general unions; it met every three months. As with the majority of labour confederations, however, most of the power between Congresses was *de facto* concentrated in the NEC.

In sum, in the 2000s, Moroccan trade unionism was severely fragmented, while in Tunisia it was highly centralised. As already argued, the single trade union arrangement was a crucial part of Tunisia's rigid system of labour institutions, making it less adaptable to pressures from below. At the same time, the UGTT had a larger base both in the public and in the private sector.

For what concerns the relationship between the trade unions and the political parties, the Moroccan system of labour institutions featured party mediation between the unions and the state, while in Tunisia the UGTT "hosted" opposition parties within its ranks. As seen above, party mediation between the unions and the state had been a factor in the fragmentation of Moroccan trade unionism. Most Moroccan trade unions are linked to a political party: the FDT to the USFP, the UGTM to the *Istiqlal*, and the

[264] See Note 241. Yet only the workplace unions with several hundred members (the exact number varied) had the right to send Congress delegates. This meant that the workers employed in small firms, common in the private sector, remained unrepresented.

UNTM to the PJD. The CDT, since 2001, has been linked to the CNI. The CDT-CNI combination is peculiar in that it is the union that leads the party, rather than the opposite. The CNI, in turn, is part of the electoral alliance *Fédération de Gauche* (FdG), along with the *Parti Socialiste Unifié* (PSU) and the *Parti de l'Avant-garde Démocratique et Socialiste* (PADS). All the FdG parties emerged out of left-wing splits from the USFP, and their militants are active within the CDT, which in turn openly endorses the FdG at the elections. The CDT is in any case open to workers from all political tendencies, and it thus also includes activists from other radical Left groups like *Al-Mounadil-a*, as well as Islamists from *Al-Adl wa al-Ihssane* (AwI, Justice and Charity).[265]

The UMT has historically claimed to be independent from the political parties, although its critics (e.g. Chawqui 2014) charge that the leadership seems to follow the Palace on important political decisions.[266] A great variety of parties are present in the UMT through their activists, but the most important are *Ennahj* (which, as seen above, is the backbone of the UMT Left) and the *Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme* (PPS).[267] Indeed, UMT-USIB SG Amal El Amri became MP in 2007 under the banner of the PPS. Right-wing parties such as the UC and the *Rassemblement National des Indépendants* (RNI) are also present in the UMT.[268]

During the struggle for independence, the UGTT was allied to the *Neo-Destour*, but since the party fused with the state apparatus it could not have a real mediatory function between the union and the state. The opposition parties were always less powerful than the UGTT, therefore – rather than mediating between the labour confederation and the state – several of them sought refuge within it. Since 1956, the UGTT had included the PCT militants that had joined after the USTT's dissolution. From the 1970s onwards, the single labour confederation became home to virtually all Tunisian political tendencies, which – within limits – found in the

[265] Interviews 1, 4, 17, 19, 20.
[266] Oft-quoted examples are the signature of the agreement for the Labour Code in 2003, the endorsement of the 2011 Constitution, and the expulsion of the UMT Left in 2012 (see below). A more recent "suspect" episode was the UMT's endorsement of the PAM at the 2016 parliamentary elections, in spite of the union's traditional distance from party politics. This endorsement came in the midst of efforts by the Palace to boost the PAM's performance to contain the PJD.
[267] In 1974, the ex-PCM was legalised as the PPS under the leadership of Ali Yata, on a platform of accepting the monarchical and religious nature of the state.
[268] According to the Moroccan political scientist Mohammed Darif, there was a time when Mahjoub Ben Seddik used to ask UMT activists to vote for the UC, and the UC SG Mohammed Abied was also a high UMT cadre (*La vie éco*, 25 May 2012).

UGTT a "shelter" from state repression.

In the 2000s, the UGTT Left included the illegal Marxist-Leninist groups that had originated from *Perspectives* (the most important being the PCOT and the *Watads*), legal leftist parties such as *Ettajdid* (The Renewal, ex-PCT) and the *Parti Démocrate Progressiste* (PDP derived from a moderate split from *El 'Amel Ettounsi*), and various Arab nationalist tendencies. The UGTT's political centre controlled the "bureaucratic machine" of the union. It originated from the *Neo-Destour* and it included the Achourists and, less prominently, the RCDists. There was also a right-wing represented by the Islamists. According to Alexander (2000), *Ennahda* started to build a presence in the UGTT in the late 1980s but it was unable to gain support from more than 10% of its base.

The repression of dissent outside of the labour confederation led to the further politicisation of union militancy, as the illegal leftist groups were forced to use the UGTT as a cover for their political activities. As a leftist activist declared:

> With all the repression, it was very risky for us as trade unionists to declare out loud that we belonged to a political party. So we ended up mixing the political struggle with the trade union and social struggle. (Interview 75)

For example, access to the regional and local union buildings was an important resource, as the illegal groups did not have the possibility to establish their own offices. The relevant UGTT structures were often pressured to mediate with the state to ease political repression, e.g. by demanding the liberation of arrested militants. It was also possible to use the UGTT's name to receive the legal authorisation for meetings and demonstrations, as long as their political character did not become too explicit.

Thus, unlike most Moroccan unions, the UGTT was not linked to any particular party mediating between labour and the state through the parliament or the government. However, it harboured several conflicting political tendencies within its structures due to the absence of union pluralism and the external repression of dissent, which contributed to internal polarisation.

The Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions also maintained contact and collaborated with civil society organisations, especially through their leftist internal

currents. For example, *Ennahj* is an important political party within the *Association Marocaine des Droits Humains* (AMDH), which resulted in interlocking memberships and leaderships between the UMT Left and the AMDH, with the same leaders taking positions of responsibility in both organisations but usually at different points in time. There is also a common militant trajectory leading from the leftist UNEM student groups and from the ANDCM to the UMT Left.

The ANDCM was founded on 26 October 1991 and it grouped unemployed graduates of various leftist tendencies (see Emperador 2007). The unemployed movement later splintered into a bewildering array of small groups (most often non-politicised), but the ANDCM remained the largest national organisation of the unemployed. As seen above, the UMT local administrations federation is mostly made up of ex-ANDCM members. Under leftist control, the Rabat UMT building was opened to these groups, particularly the ANDCM.[269] A Rabat trade unionist belonging to *Ennahj* remembers:

> At some point, the UMT building had become empty. Nobody wanted to go there anymore. It's when we arrived that the workers found some trust again. Those were good times and the [union] bureaucracy was afraid. […] The workers met the unemployed graduates and expressed their solidarity towards them. There was a big movement. (Interview 30)

The UGTT too was linked through extensive interlocking memberships to other civil society organisations, notably the *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme* (LTDH) and the *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (ATFD). However, notwithstanding these connections, the UGTT dissidents worried that the compromise between the NEC and the regime was damaging the legitimacy of the union in the eyes of democratic civil society (e.g. RSDM 2010b, Appendix, pp. 314-8). Strong links also exist between the UGTT and the UGET. As the UGET is dominated by the Left, it is common practice for former UGET militants to enter the UGTT if they join the waged

[269] In 2001, however, after the police repressed a demonstration of the unemployed graduates outside of the Rabat UMT building, the authorities razed the section of the building that had been allocated to the ANDCM. The ANDCM militants accused Mahjoub Ben Seddik himself of having called for the intervention by the police to evict the unemployed graduates (Emperador 2011, p. 90).

workforce.[270]

The explosion of unemployment among university graduates prompted some former UGET militants linked to the illegal leftist groups to follow the example of their Moroccan comrades and create, in 2006, the *Union des Diplômés Chômeurs* (UDC) (see Hamdi and Weipert-Fenner 2017). The UDC was denied state recognition and remained illegal until 2011. It emerged out of struggles against discrimination in public administration hiring that targeted former leftist (as well as Islamist) student militants.[271] The UDC had regular contacts and collaborations with the UGTT politicised militants, while the UGTT NEC kept its distance.[272]

The UGTT itself was clearly the largest civil society organisation in Tunisia and – also because of the regime's strict control over the country's political life – it had more influence than even the largest opposition parties. In Morocco, on the other hand, the trade unions had a more marginal position in the political and civil society landscape due to their fragmentation and small membership. As we will see below, this contributed to the difference in the levels of working-class associational power between Morocco and Tunisia.

5.2 The Trade Unions and Marginalised Workers

As noted in Chapter 2, stratifications within the working class weaken workers' capacity to defend their interests *vis-à-vis* the capitalist class. The trade unions, which normally organise the better off fractions of the working class, can reinforce this fragmentation by exclusively taking up the grievances of their members rather than also considering the interests of marginalised workers. This section explores the relations between the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions and two types of marginalised workers: female workers and precarious workers.

The main Moroccan unions, as well as the UGTT, have traditionally supported the positions of the women's movement. However, as it is often pointed out, their actual practice has lagged behind their discourse. As everywhere, women in the Maghreb face gendered oppression in and beyond the workplace. Female interviewees

[270] Interviews 49, 50, 51, 68, 74, 78, 80.
[271] Indeed, the drive to unionise foreign-owned call centres was initiated by UGET graduates who, being *de facto* banned from public administration, had settled for long-term employment in call centres (Interview 50).
[272] Interviews 68, 74, 78.

have denounced wage discrimination in the private sector[273] and career discrimination and cases of sexual harassment in both the private and the public sector. Women are also disproportionately employed in some of the most vulnerable manual sectors of the Moroccan and Tunisian economies, particularly agriculture and light manufacturing for export (see Bouasria 2013; Debuysere 2018),[274] where they often face routinised violations of basic labour legislation. The trade unions have penetrated even these vulnerable sectors, but to a much lesser extent than the more secure sectors.

To discourage unionisation, management can hinder women's militancy by taking advantage of patriarchy in the household and the community. As reported by a former union representative in a cable factory:

> The bosses used our families to stop the women who spoke out and struggled; they called our fathers and brothers many times to tell them to stop us. Once they called the boyfriends of the girls and told them: "Your woman is not coming to work, she's out in the street…". (Interview 62)

Some trade unionists have commented that the presence of female cadres is especially important for organising vulnerable feminised sectors such as textiles and agriculture, because female workers normally feel more confident in co-operating with female trade unionists.[275] However, Moroccan and Tunisian women face similar obstacles in taking on union responsibilities. These remarks by a Tunisian trade unionist are quite representative:

> There is discrimination within the trade union itself, they always try to keep the men in the positions of responsibility. And they always use the same arguments that management uses: you'll have to move a lot, sometimes you'll have to stay out late at night… Trade union meetings are generally held at uncomfortable times for women with family responsibilities […] and there's a very limited number of men who accept

[273] According to a study by the *Centre de Recherche et d'Études Sociales* (CRES 2012), in 2011 the average wage for women in the private sector was 75% of the average wage for men.
[274] In 2012, women in Tunisia made up 25% of the working population, yet they constituted 43% of employment in manufacturing and 72% of employment in the textile sector, which – with 240,800 workers – is by far the largest manufacturing sector in the country (calculated by the author based on INS 2013).
[275] Interviews 12, 14, 29.

sharing housework. (Interview 52)

Moroccan trade unionism, however, has advanced beyond the UGTT with regard to female representation in leadership positions. Several Moroccan unions have co-operated with international organisations to carry out training sessions targeting women specifically, and some have inserted gender quotas in their statutes. For example, the UMT-FNSA had adopted a system of gender quotas since the 1990s. At the UMT 10th Congress in 2010, the union adopted a new statute including gender quotas of one third for all union structures, with the aim of moving towards parity. At the same Congress, two women were included in the NEC: Amal El Amri from the UMT-USIB and Khadija Ghamiri from the Rabat UMT. However, while changes in formal regulations resulted in actual progress, the unions are still far from parity, the quotas are often not met, and actual decision-making power lies in the hands of men in the majority of cases.

In Tunisia, female leaders within the UGTT remain scarce, despite the history of women's struggles within the union. The feminist movement that emerged in the 1970s established a *Commission des Femmes Travailleuses* (CFT) within the UGTT, in 1982, to push the union to oppose discrimination against women in the workplace (see Debuysere 2018). The CFT disappeared with the 1985 crackdown but it was relaunched after the 1989 rehabilitation of the UGTT, and in 1991 it achieved a formal status in the UGTT's internal regulation as an advisory body. In the early 1990s, the CFT promoted a debate on the adoption of gender quotas for the UGTT internal structures, but a unanimous resolution was not attained within the Commission itself.[276]

In 2006, the UGTT declared that 25% of its membership was female but only 9% of union cadres (all levels included) were women (UGTT 2006, p. 19). The UGTT NEC remained entirely composed of men until the 23rd Congress of 2017, when Naima Hammami was elected. Another complaint is that the UGTT should do more to take up gender-specific grievances, for example by demanding gender budgeting.[277] The author has also received reports of sexual harassment within the trade union itself.

In essence, both the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions – as is the case for

[276] Interviews 52, 92.
[277] Interview 92.

many labour unions elsewhere – have so far failed to provide strong answers to gender discrimination in the workplace, as shown by the fact that the workforce in both countries is still strongly segmented along gender lines.

Regarding precarious workers, due to the obstacles they face in unionising, the core social bases of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions are still relatively secure workers. In Morocco, relations with the precarious fractions of the working class remain weak, with important exceptions, such as the UMT-FNSA's efforts to unionise agricultural labourers, including seasonal workers. Organising in the private sector remains difficult, and it becomes almost impossible for outsourced workers, workers on fixed-term contracts, and other precarious labourers to unionise:

> It's hard… Now it's even difficult to organise the stable workers, because Morocco still has the problem of trade union freedoms… […] We have tried with the outsourced workers at SAMIR, but the day after they are kicked out in the street. Even if we call the labour inspectors, they can do nothing. (Interview 32)

Faced with anti-union discrimination, on the one hand, and with the lack of internal democracy and cases of union corruption, on the other, many workers in the vulnerable sectors develop a purely instrumentalist attitude towards the unions. A fisherman union activist from Agadir observed that:

> The people that go to the unions are not politicised, they just want to improve their conditions and know nothing about the unions. They go there like you'd go to see a lawyer. The fishermen don't criticise the union to improve it, they're just negative in all senses. If there is a defeat, they say the union is useless. Even if they are forced to wage a struggle, they don't have a strong attachment to their union. (Interview 21)

In many of the accounts collected, workers from a particular firm decided to form a union only after they had already come under threat: "When the workers decide

to strike, they need the 'umbrella' of a union".[278] After defeat, the workplace union gets dissolved and, at the next occasion, the workers who survived dismissal form a new workplace union with a different confederation, in the hope that it will work better. The unions, on their part, are sometimes wary of investing their resources into workers employed in small firms and vulnerable sectors, given the difficulties in building a stable base there. A leftist trade unionist from Tangier commented:

> Let's take the case of Tunisia. Even if there was a bureaucracy more or less corrupt and implicated with Ben Ali's regime, the UGTT kept a certain independence and a certain base in the various regions and sectors… Here the union leadership doesn't have a strategy to keep and develop the new [workplace] unions. For example, in the Tangier Free Zone, the people who at some point created a [workplace] union might be a total of 4,000… It's a lot. But many left, so there is no accumulation of forces and cadres. (Interview 37)

The workers thus make little distinction between one confederation and the other and, unsurprisingly, they have little interest in the ideologies of the parties to which such unions are affiliated. A call centre worker from Fes said:

> First, we went to the CDT, but they got scared and didn't want to help us. So we tried with the FDT, but they were old… they really had some technical problems in understanding how it works in a call centre, we couldn't communicate well. So we finally started a [workplace] union with the UGTM, because at the time the SG [Hamid Chabat] was also the mayor of Fes [as well as the SG of the *Istiqlal* Party]. So, as the situation in the company had become tense, we hoped this would help us out. (Interview 11)

In Tunisia too, union penetration in the private sector was mainly limited to workers formally hired with open-ended contracts. Employment precarity, however, became a pressing issue for the UGTT, as many officials saw that it weakened the

[278] Interview 27.

bargaining power of the secure workers. In the mid-2000s, a plurality of UGTT cadres – 36.2% – declared that the rise in precarious employment and unemployment was the worst threat to trade unionism in Tunisia (UGTT 2006, p. 40). Since the 1990s, the UGTT waged a campaign against outsourcing and, in April 2011, it won an agreement theoretically forbidding it in the public sector, bringing almost 60,000 workers into standard employment (King 2013). The direct hiring of outsourced workers was also a demand in important private sector strikes, such as the January 2011 strike at Coca Cola's contractor SFBT.[279] More radically, the politicised UGTT militants have often supported the informally organised mobilisations of the precarious youth that have taken a central position in the country's politics since the 2008 Gafsa revolt.[280]

The Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions have at times supported the grievances of female and precarious workers but, overall, their main focus remained on the needs of their core constituency of male and relatively secure workers. The most important difference is that, due to higher union density, on the eve of the 2011 uprisings the UGTT had a relatively deeper penetration in the vulnerable sectors compared to the Moroccan unions, and it had more resources to defend the marginalised workers when pressured to do so. These factors are further discussed in the following sections.

5.3 Technical Composition and Working-Class Structural Power

This section compares the technical composition of the working class in Morocco and Tunisia. At the macro-level, the technical composition refers to the national structure of employment as organised through different economic and institutional sectors, contractual arrangements, welfare provisions, etc. As discussed in Chapter 2, different technical compositions carry with them different levels of working-class structural power, in that the location of workers in the economy can provide more or less resources and opportunities for mobilisation.

Table 10 (pp. 180) supplies synthetic data on the indicators for working-class structural power presented in Chapter 2, showing that, on the eve of the 2011 uprisings, overall working-class structural power was higher in Tunisia than in Morocco. Some of the figures, while coming from authoritative sources, are unlikely

[279] Interview 53.

[280] After Ben Ali's downfall, on several occasions the UGTT local or regional unions have been pressured into declaring local general strikes in solidarity with the protests of non-unionised precarious youths.

to be exact. Yet the scale and coherence of the differences between the indicators for the two countries allow one to draw robust conclusions.

Table 10 – Working-class structural power

When possible, the author selected data for the years immediately preceding the 2011 uprisings.

	Morocco	**Tunisia**
Sectorial location	–	+
Waged employment in total employment	44.2% (2010)[281]	68.3% (2010)[281]
Formal employment in total employment	47.1% (2000-08)[282]	64.3% (2000-08)[282]
Public sector employment in total employment	8.5% (2010)[283]	22% (2010)[284]
Industrial employment in total employment	20% (2010)[281]	29.4% (2010)[281]
Manufacturing employment in total employment	11% (2011)[281]	18.3% (2010)[281]
Employment in 100+ firms in total employment	17% (2015)[285]	40% (2015)[285]
Job security	–	+
Workers with open-ended contracts in total employment	11% (2010)[283]	42% (2011)[286]
Social security coverage	30% (2008)[287]	78.9% (2010)[288]
Human Development Index	–	+
Position in HDI ranking	114 (2010)[282]	81 (2010)[282]
GNI per capita (PPP 2008 $)	4,628 (2010)[282]	7,979 (2010)[282]
Income Gini Coefficient	40.7 (2006)[289]	35.8 (2010)[289]
Coefficient of human inequality	28.5 (2014)[282]	21.4 (2014)[282]
Population in multidimensional poverty	28.5% (2000-08)[282]	2.8% (2000-08)[282]
Adult literacy rate	56.4% (2005-08)[282]	78% (2005-08)[282]
Mean years of schooling	4.4 (2010)[282]	6.5 (2010)[282]

[281] ILOSTAT.
[282] UN-HDI.
[283] HCP 2011.
[284] Calculated by the author based on IMF 2014 and INS 2011.
[285] European Commission 2015.
[286] INS 2013.
[287] CNSS Morocco 2009.
[288] MAS 2014.
[289] World DataBank.

Life expectancy at birth	71.8 (2010)[282]	74.3 (2010)[282]
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	32 (2008)[282]	18 (2008)[282]
The social wage	–	+
Public expenditure on social benefits (% of GDP)	4.3% (2011)[290]	7.7% (2011)[290]
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP)	5.7% (2000-07)[282]	7.2% (2000-07)[282]
Public expenditure on health (% of GDP)	1.7% (2000-07)[282]	3% (2000-07)[282]
Overall working-class structural power	–	+

In Morocco, the long-standing consequences of Hassan II's basic continuity with the colonial policy of primary product export – as a result of his political wariness of industrialisation – are evident today. In 2010, Morocco's agricultural sector still constituted 36.3% of total employment (ILOSTAT). This was an important factor in placing a higher share of Moroccan workers in unwaged and/or informal jobs, limiting the potential recruitment pool of the trade unions. In Tunisia, in contrast, between 1961 and 2014, agricultural employment fell from 45% to 15% of total employment (see Graph 8, p. 151).

The Moroccan industrial sector declined from 24.7% of total employment in 1982 (*Royaume du Maroc*, 1984) to oscillate between 18.5% and 20% during the 2000s (ILOSTAT), while manufacturing declined from 16.2% of total employment in 1982 (*Royaume du Maroc*, 1984) to 11% in 2011 (ILOSTAT). In Tunisia, industrial employment stood at 24% in 1961 and it kept growing until 1981, after which it stagnated at around 30% (see Graph 8, p. 151). Employment in manufacturing rose from 7% in 1961 to 19% in the mid-1980s, and after that it stayed between 18% and 20% (*Ibidem*). This means that the share of employment in the industrial sector, which is usually amenable to workers' mobilisations, and manufacturing in particular, stopped growing in both countries from the 1980s onwards, and in Morocco it actually declined. However, the share of industrial and manufacturing employment in the 2000s was significantly higher in Tunisia than in Morocco.

Waged employment in Morocco declined from 54% in the 1970s to 37% in 2004, before climbing back up to 45% in 2014 (Daoud 1980; *Royaume du Maroc*

[290] IMF Government Finance Statistics.

2006; ILOSTAT). In Tunisia, instead, the rate of waged employment oscillated around 68-9% during the 2000s and reached 71-2% after the uprising (ILOSTAT). Morocco's small public sector, which stood at 8.5% in 2010, was also an impediment to working-class power, since violations of the labour law and anti-union behaviour are much more common in the private sector. To the contrary, Tunisian public sector employment in 2010 stood at 22% of total employment.

Moreover, in Morocco only 17% of workers laboured in workplaces with more than 100 employees – another serious obstacle to unionisation – while in Tunisia this figure was more than double. Finally, for what concerns job security, Tunisia had larger shares of workers under formal open-ended contracts and covered by social security.[291]

Despite the Moroccan regime's recent efforts to promote economic growth and social indicators – which resulted in some improvements and much international praise – the fact remains that Morocco is still the poorest country in North Africa and the lowest-ranking in human development.[292] In 2010, Tunisia's GNI per capita was 172.5% that of Morocco. At the same time, Tunisia had lower Gini and Human Inequality Coefficients, which means that Tunisian workers (in the broad definition used here) were less deprived than Moroccan ones. These different performances in human development are not only due to Tunisia's historically higher economic growth but also to its larger welfare spending. In fact, despite the slowdown in welfare expansion, in the neoliberal period Tunisia was the highest social spender in the region (El-Said and Harrigan 2014, p. 113).

This constitutes another confirmation of the old social sciences discovery that revolt is not explained by absolute deprivation (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977). What seems most significant in Tunisia is the widespread perception of the neoliberal erosion of the former populist social pact. In Morocco, strictly speaking, there never was a populist social pact, which probably lowered the expectations of many Moroccans. Myriam Catusse observes that:

[291] Morocco's two-year limit on fixed-term contracts is more advantageous to workers than Tunisia's four-year limit. However, this difference should be treated carefully because the application of labour legislation was probably weaker in Morocco than in Tunisia.

[292] Hassan II reportedly felt humiliated by the first UNDP reports (Vermeren 2009, p. 237). For instance, the 1990 report estimated that, in 1985, Morocco still had an adult illiteracy rate of 66%, significantly higher than Tunisia's 45% at the time (UNDP 1990).

> Contrary to Tunisia or Algeria, the Moroccan welfare state has never had a golden age. […] Therefore, the problem of 'disengagement', or of the privatisation of social protections, did not represent a radical break.[293] (Catusse 2010, p. 189).

A more favourable distribution among economic and institutional sectors, higher job security, higher "human development" performances, and a stronger welfare state meant that Tunisian workers had more resources than their Moroccan counterparts on the eve of the 2011 uprisings. Of course, this does not mean that Tunisia was or is a country where workers enjoyed outstanding employment conditions, it merely indicates that working-class structural power in Tunisia was high *relative* to Morocco.

5.4 Political Composition and Working-Class Associational Power

This section compares the political composition of the Moroccan and Tunisian working classes to assess the level of working-class associational power in the two countries. Political composition is a multi-faceted concept that includes both formal and informal types of organisation. Since this section is geared towards assessing working-class associational power, it will mainly focus on formal organisations – particularly the trade unions. However, it is important to note that in both Morocco and Tunisia the centrality of the trade unions in working-class mobilisations was put into question by the prominence of movements by young precarious workers,[294] which took place outside of the workplace and formal organisations. These must therefore be considered before moving on to the analysis of the trade unions.

Precarious workers' movements grew throughout the 2000s in Morocco (see Bennafla and Emperador 2011; Bogaert 2015), while in Tunisia they appeared dramatically with the 2008 Gafsa revolt (see Allal 2010; Chouikha and Gobe 2009; Hibou 2015a). The mobilised precarious workers were often backed by the union Left, but their very working conditions made it impossible for them to become union members and to use strikes as a weapon (Feltrin 2018b). While broadly left-wing ideas

[293] Translated from French by the author.

[294] As explained in Chapter 2, this phrase also includes the so-called unemployed, because – for the most part – they actually perform precarious forms of work. "Youth" can be understood here as a culturally constructed designation to indicate a person "in transition" between childhood and adulthood. A consequence of precarity (as well as of longer time spent in education) is the lengthening of this transitional phase.

and sensibilities were widespread in the 1970s, the Moroccan and Tunisian Left today have to compete with strong Islamist movements, and both face widespread "anti-politics" feelings among the population. A stable left-wing ideological and organisational presence among the precarious youth is ensured by the ANDCM in Morocco and by the UDC in Tunisia. Yet these organisations mostly represent unemployed graduates, who are only a fraction of the precarious.

Roadblocks and riots are the precarious workers' main tools for seeking concessions. Less sensational than riots, roadblocks can produce greater economic damage and have the advantages of being more sustainable in time and of involving less risk of harm to the participants and to others. Due to the fact that they halt the production of value from outside the workplace, roadblocks are effectively the strike of the workless. The latter can exploit logistical weak spots to clog the circulation of strategic commodities and, as a consequence, to slow down or stop production. However, unlike strikes, roadblocks are always illegal, and therefore their practicability depends directly on the balance of power between protesters and law enforcement.

The mobilisations of the precarious are strongly impregnated with the protesters' work ethic[295] and their core demands revolve around secure employment and local development. Secure employment is often presented as a condition for dignity, and one of the most famous slogans of the 2011 Tunisian uprising was "*Ettashghil istehqaq, ya issabat essoraq!*" ("Employment is a right, you gang of thieves!"). However, one should not necessarily take this demand at face value – after all, what people primarily need is the regular income deriving from secure employment, and many protesters have been happy to accept public sector jobs in which they were reportedly not given much to do.

In Morocco, all through the 2000s, social mobilisations emerged in several marginalised areas of the country,[296] particularly over the cost of living, employment, and access to resources (Aziki 2011). The most remarkable were the Bouarfa movement against rising water prices and the Sidi Ifni movement for employment and local development (see Chapter 6). However, these protests tended to remain localised, and they never circulated into a nationwide cascade of mobilisations by the

[295] This is also confirmed by Ben Amor and Moussa's (2015) research on attitudes towards work and unemployment among the youth of Tunis's working-class banlieues.
[296] Al Hoceima, Beni Mellal, Errachidia, Sefrou, Sidi Bouafif, Taza, etc.

precarious, as was the case in Tunisia in January 2011 and, to a lesser extent, January 2016 and January 2018. In 2011, the nationwide circulation of struggles in Morocco was ensured by the M20Fev, overall characterised by a more intellectual class composition. While, on some occasions, leftist trade unionists attempted to mobilise union support for the protests of the Moroccan precarious, this did not result in large-scale regional strikes until recently.[297]

In Tunisia, the cycle of struggle involving young precarious workers as its protagonists can be said to have started with the Gafsa revolt for employment in January 2008 and to have culminated in the 2011 uprising. State employees and manufacturing workers participated in the regional general strikes called by the UGTT at the height of the 2011 uprising and contributed to a new surge of strikes after Ben Ali's downfall. However, the 2011 regional strikes were called as a result of pressure coming not from the factory shop floor, but from the streets outside. After Ben Ali's downfall, the mobilisations of the precarious have continued to this day, but they have since then failed to spread to the other fractions of the working class.

The informal nature of most mobilisations of the precarious makes it difficult to synthetically assess their associational power, despite the importance of this phenomenon. The rest of this section will therefore focus on associational power as the power of trade unions. Table 11 (p. 186) provides a synthesis of the indicators for working-class associational power established in Chapter 2. Again, not all data are likely to be exact, but the coherence and the magnitude of the differences among them are sufficient to conclude that working-class associational power was higher in Tunisia than in Morocco before the uprisings.

Morocco, before the 2011 uprisings, featured a higher degree of civil and political rights than Tunisia. However, despite these freedoms, Moroccan trade unions remained very weak, as the other indicators of associational power show. In Tunisia, the tension between relatively high working-class power and very low civil and political rights probably contributes to explaining the sudden and insurrectional trajectory of the country's democratisation.

In Morocco, the comparatively large scope of action for opposition parties allowed for the existence of party mediation between most trade unions and the state.

[297] This was the case of the *Hirak Esh'aby* of the Rif in 2017 and the *Hirak* of Jerada in 2018. Yet here it is not clear whether official local union support made a substantial contribution to the show of force of an already mobilised population.

At the same time, the Moroccan state's mode of union incorporation through social dialogue touched a broader range of policies than Tunisia's narrow incorporation via tri-annual national-sectorial wage bargaining. Moreover, Moroccan workers enjoyed the right to form new unions, while in Tunisia attempts to create alternative confederations were repressed (except in times of crisis between the UGTT and the party-state). However, so far, party mediation, social dialogue, and competitive unionism have not enabled the Moroccan unions to accede to significant power and were more often vectors of partial co-optation and weakening, as the CDT's history shows.

Table 11 – Working-class associational power

	Morocco	**Tunisia**
Trade union density in waged employment	6% (2015)[298]	23% (2010)[299]
Trade union density in total employment	3.2% (2015)[298]	15.8% (2010)[299]
Collective bargaining coverage	5-10% (2015)[285]	90% (2015 and before)[285]
Civil liberties rating (1 best, 7 worst)	4 (2010)[300]	5 (2010)[300]
Political rights rating (1 best, 7 worst)	5 (2010)[300]	7 (2010)[300]
Internal democracy	Low	Medium
Overall working-class associational power	–	+

Union representation in the Moroccan parliament was a further incentive to union fragmentation, as each party tried to have its own labour-wing in order to maximise its seats. By the 2000s, there were over twenty labour confederations in Morocco. Four confederations gained the "most representative" status in the 2009 professional elections: the UMT, the CDT, the FDT, and the UGTM (in decreasing order). However, low union density meant that even the largest confederations directly represented an extremely limited fraction of the working class. In this context, the proliferation of trade unions – with little difference between them except for their party

[298] HCP 2016.
[299] Calculated by the author based on UGTT and INS 2011.
[300] Freedom House.

allegiance – was hardly a blessing for Moroccan workers because each confederation wielded meagre power and coordination was costlier.[301]

Trade union density in Tunisia was probably almost four times as high as in Morocco in 2010 and has increased after the uprising. Before 2011, the UGTT claimed 517,000 members, meaning that union density was about 23% of the waged workforce.[302] In 2010, an ILO report estimated union density in the Tunisian private sector at 27% (ILO 2010). This is an exaggeration, and the 10-15% estimated by the European Commission (2015) seems more accurate. Yet the latter figure is still higher than Morocco's overall union density of 6% of the waged population, which includes the more unionised public sector. Since waged employees are about 44% of the Moroccan employed population, unionised workers are only 3% of the total employed population (see Table 11, p. 186). The UMT declared to the ITUC a membership of 335,000 (3.2% of the employed), but this seems exaggerated based on HCP statistics on union density, professional elections results, and the interviews conducted for this research. The CDT declared to the ITUC 61,500 members (0.6% of the employed), which instead appears realistic.

The media often explain the acknowledged "crisis of trade unionism" in Morocco by pointing to, among other elements, the unions' lack of internal democracy and their perceived high levels of corruption (e.g. *La vie éco*, 6 May 2005). While this is certainly true, two important but less mentioned factors are the *de facto* insufficiency of trade union freedoms in the country and its structure of employment, whereby vulnerable sectors are predominant (see above).

In Tunisia, since the 1970s, national and national-sectorial collective bargaining also applies to non-unionised workers, which results in collective bargaining coverage of about 90%. In 2010, Morocco only had one national-sectorial collective agreement (for bank employees), one multi-employer local agreement (for truck drivers working with the Casablanca Port), and ten firm-level collective agreements (*La vie éco*, 30 April 2010).

As seen above, until the uprisings, union democracy in Tunisia was marred by

[301] The CDT NEC member Abdelkader Zair charged that: "The multiplication of the trade unions, just like that of the political parties, has always been encouraged by the state" (*La vie éco*, 2 May 2003, translated from French by the author).

[302] After the uprising, the UGTT claimed a large increase in members that brought the total to 750,000 in 2014. A report by the European Commission estimates that UGTT membership in 2015 was 650,000 and that the three unions that emerged after the 2011 uprising had a total of 150,000 members (European Commission 2015, p. 52). This would bring trade union density to about 32% of wage-earners.

the regime's attempts to impose a pliant leadership. Yet the struggles of the 1970s made unilateral state control over the UGTT untenable. This resulted in a compromise in which the union leadership had to be acceptable both for the regime and most of the union base. Up to the 2000s, the regime kept intervening effectively and in manifold ways in internal union life. However, basic internal regulations – such as the periodic election of the union leaders through Congresses – were respected.

In Morocco, the unions' internal democracy was only indirectly constrained by the regime through (decreasing) limits on the space for political opposition and (enduring) tolerance for union repression in the private sector. Due to low union density, legitimation and funding for the unions come more from the state than from their members. It is estimated that only 10-15% of the Moroccan unions' budget comes from membership fees (*La vie éco*, 14 February 2017).[303] This imbalance allowed for severe disregard for internal regulations (see Chapter 3). In the 2000s, the SGs of the three historical confederations had been in charge for decades. Mahjoub Ben Seddik remained UMT SG from the union's foundation in 1955 until his death in 2010. Abderrazak Afilal led the UGTM from 1962 to 2006. Noubir Amaoui, elected SG at the CDT 1st Congress in 1978, headed the union for forty years.

In brief, on the eve of the 2011 uprisings, the Moroccan trade unions had less members, less collective bargaining power, and less internal democracy than the UGTT, meaning that they were less powerful and representative despite Morocco's broader scope for civil and political rights. Moreover, the Moroccan trade unions were extremely fragmented and probably enjoyed less legitimacy than their Tunisian counterpart. The UGTT, despite the submission of its top leadership to the regime, had a solid and polarising radical internal opposition. In Morocco, a comparable polarisation only existed in the UMT, but the UMT Left had a relatively limited influence on the Moroccan trade union system as a whole, as the subsequent events would show.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a comparison of trade unionism and working-class power in

[303] According to Ben Romdhane (2011, p. 245), 57% of the UGTT's budget in 2005 came from membership fees. 51% represented dues from public sector employees. The state could and did suspend this system in times of crisis. Yet most militant trade unionists were to be found in the public sector, and they did use their membership to pressure the UGTT NEC.

Morocco and Tunisia on the eve of the 2011 Arab uprisings. Both the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions chiefly represented relatively secure workers at the expense of marginalised workers, such as female or precarious workers. However, the UGTT had a larger base and it occupied a more central place in the country's political system and civil society landscape relative to the Moroccan trade unions. It was, in fact, the largest civil society organisation in the country and it "hosted" within its structures the activists of most opposition parties.

Different from Cammett and Posusney's (2010) judgement that the Moroccan unions were in a more favourable position than the Tunisian ones, the analysis of the indicators for structural and associational working-class power shows that working-class power was overall higher in Tunisia than in Morocco on the eve of the uprisings. In fact, regarding the structural dimension, Tunisia featured a more favourable sectorial distribution of employment, higher job security, a better performance on social indicators, and a more developed welfare state. In respect to associational working-class power, in Tunisia trade union density and collective bargaining coverage were significantly higher than in Morocco, and internal trade union democracy was more developed, despite severe interferences by the regime.

As recounted in the former chapters, these different levels of working-class power were the result of the divergent trajectories of class struggle that played out in the histories of the two countries. The two following chapters, instead, show how the relevant trade union actors behaved before, during, and after the 2011 uprisings based on the pressures they faced and the resources at their disposal.

Chapter 6 – Morocco: Trade Union Fragmentation and the Defusing of Protest

Introduction

This chapter offers a narrative of the Moroccan social mobilisations from the run up to the 2011 uprisings to their aftermath, tracing the role of the trade unions in these events. When the Tunisian uprising erupted, Morocco was already in the midst of a wave of social mobilisations within and without the workplace, involving both secure and precarious workers. The M20Fev was only the most visible strand of this broader unrest, which, however, never reached the same level of radicalism that was seen in Tunisia.

Most large trade unions initially endorsed the M20Fev, but they gradually distanced themselves as the regime proved willing to make concessions. On the one hand, the regime offered abundant material inducements through a renewed round of social dialogue with the trade unions. On the other hand, it proposed a constitutional reform that was to be approved by a referendum. The M20Fev called for a boycott of the referendum on the grounds that the new constitutional text was not drafted by an elected assembly and that it left substantial authoritarian powers in the hands of the Palace. However, the CDT was the only labour confederation that adhered to the boycott, and even so it did not promote it through radical actions such as general strikes. After the electoral approval of the new constitution, the surge in social mobilisations started to lose momentum.

As depicted below, in a context of continuing working-class weakness, the Palace was able to use the flexibility of the Moroccan system of labour institutions – particularly party mediation between the unions and the state, trade union fragmentation, and social dialogue – to distance the unions as well as the precarious workers' mobilisations from the uncompromising M20Fev. The trade unions, while initially sympathetic to the M20Fev, eventually supported, for the most part, the Palace-led adjustments and abstained from radical action against the regime. Arguably, a confrontational stance was discouraged by the fact that, compared to Tunisia, the

Moroccan trade unions faced weaker pressures from below to directly oppose the regime and – in any case – they had more limited resources to mobilise relative to the UGTT.

6.1 The Trade Unions and Social Unrest on the Eve of the Uprising

This section chronicles the most important currents of social unrest that culminated in the 2011 Moroccan uprising. These featured community movements led by precarious youths, private sector strikes (most notably in mining), and mobilisations by public sector workers. The trade unions intervened in all of these types of protest, but – due to their limited power – they did not manage to win substantial concessions before 2011.

In the late 2000s, various forms of social unrest surged in Morocco (see Bogaert 2015), including community movements that saw a prominent role played by precarious youths, the most remarkable being those of Bouarfa and Sidi Ifni. Bouarfa is a small town in the marginalised region of Oriental, not far from the Algerian border. In September 2006, the population stopped paying their water bills to protest against price hikes (Bennafla and Emperador 2011). The boycott was accompanied by various mobilisations, especially by the unemployed. On 12 May 2007, about 10,000 people (almost half of the population) took to the streets to demonstrate against the intervention of the public officials in charge of recovering water dues. This display of force led to an agreement for the distribution of water free of charge.

Even more protracted in time was the movement of Sidi Ifni, a Southern sea town in the Guelmim-Oued Noun region. On 22 May 2005, about 7,000 residents marched, demanding employment opportunities and public investment in the local infrastructure (Bennafla and Emperador 2011). With a new demonstration on 7 August 2005, the number of protesters doubled. After this, mobilisations continued periodically in various forms: marches, sit-ins, protest camps, etc. In May 2008, the protest turned violent and a blockade of the port began. On 7 June, over 6,000 riot police raided the town, broke up the mobilisations, and arrested several protesters.

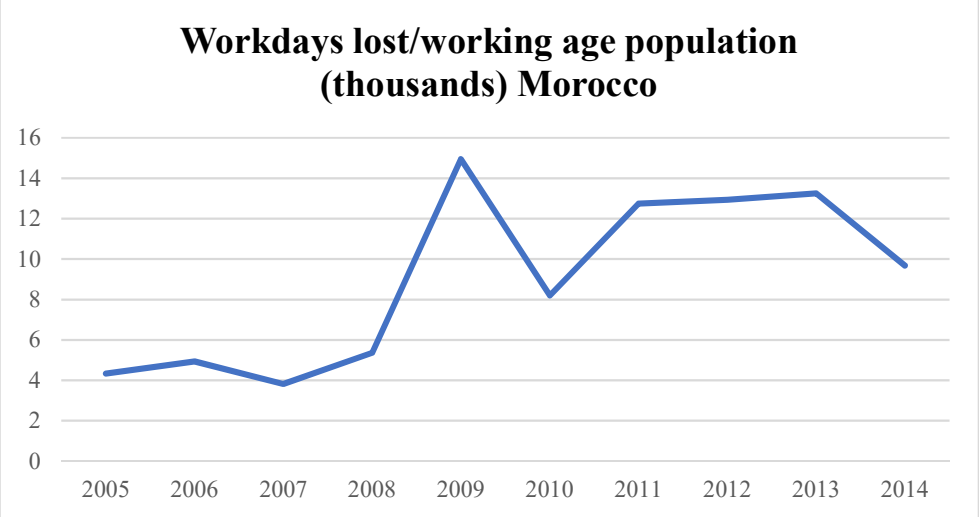
These mobilisations displayed striking similarities to the 2008 Gafsa revolt (see Allal and Bennafla 2011 for a comparison), since their demands revolved around secure employment and local development, and they were located in marginalised towns with very little industry except, in some cases, mining. The precarious youths were the protagonists in public actions, although they were by no means alone, as

virtually the whole community was to some degree involved. The social infrastructure for mobilisation was provided by deeply entrenched communal solidarities, rather than the concentration of workers in large workplaces. Formal organisations acted as supporters of largely informally organised protests.

Just like in Gafsa (see Chapter 7), local union activists in public administration participated in the movements of both Bouarfa and Sidi Ifni. In this respect, the most widely known figure was Seddik Kabbouri, Local SG of the Bouarfa CDT. However, the role of the Moroccan trade unionists was not as salient and publicised as that of Redeyef's UGTT militants. In Bouarfa the most prominent group was the AMDH (Bogaert 2015, p. 132), while in Sidi Ifni the ANDCM and *ATTAC Maroc* stood out more (Bennafla and Emperador 2011, p. 13).

The weakness and fragmentation of Moroccan trade unionism contributed to its lack of centrality in community mobilisations relative to Redeyef. Yet it should also be kept in mind that Morocco's political opening of the 1990s granted more space to organisations other than the unions – such as political parties and NGOs – to intervene in the public sphere. Thus, a coalition of leftist human rights activists, unemployed graduates, party militants, labour and student unionists, etc. – often with multiple affiliations – coalesced into the *Mouvement Contre la Cherté de la Vie* in an attempt to coordinate the protests. While the *Mouvement* did not actually establish significant national coordination, it was able to support the local protests where they did take place.

Graph 10 – Private sector strike activity in Morocco, 2005-2014



Calculated by the author based on ILO and Ministry of Employment data.

Workers' strikes in the private sector, which had peaked during the *gouvernement de l'alternance*, declined steeply in the early 2000s and remained low for most of the decade. Nonetheless, in 2009, as a result of the local impacts of the global financial crisis, strikes increased across the private sector and the number of workdays lost spiked to 313,523 (see Graph 10, p. 192). In 2010, labour unrest in the private sector remained high by the standards of the decade but, as usual, it mostly consisted of defensive strikes against severe breaches of the Labour Code, layoffs, and the non-payment of wages (*La vie éco*, 18 March 2011a).

However, even in the years before, there were several high-profile strikes that attracted the attention of the national activist scene. Restructuring in the mining sector caused protracted struggles in various mines, including those of Imini, Jbel Awam, and Khouribga. The Imini manganese mine is located in the vicinity of Ouarzazate and is operated by the semi-public company *Société Anonyme Chérifienne des Études Minières*. In October 2002, 134 miners affiliated with the CDT started a permanent sit-in to protest against the planned restructuring of the workforce.[304] On 15 April 2004, the company – with the UMT's collaboration, according to the strike leaders – organised 120 strike-breakers to attack the sit-in (see ICFTU 2005). During the chaotic scenes that ensued, a strike-breaker was hurt and died the day after in the hospital. Six strike leaders were accused of homicide and, on 14 February 2005, they were each condemned to ten years in prison. The miners and the supportive activists claimed that the six were innocent and that the authorities were using the casualty as a pretext to imprison the workers' leaders. After a campaign for their liberation, the strike leaders were finally released on 18 April 2005.

In the lead, zinc, and silver mine of Jbel Awam, the *Compagnie Minière de Touissit* reduced gradually the share of the directly employed workforce to increase its reliance on outsourced workers.[305] On 4 July 2007, about 300 miners went on strike, demanding direct hiring and improved wages and conditions. On the night between 10 and 11 September 2007, while 200 workers were still on strike, the police ended the mobilisation by disbanding the picket and arresting 29 workers under Article 288 of the Penal Code (CGT-Andalucía 2007).

[304] See the documentary "Les mineurs d'Imini" by Souad Guennoun (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwSS5SeM6zo).
[305] See the documentary "Mineurs de Jbal Ouam" by Souad Guennoun (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFYzsBlGNE8).

Khouribga has revolved around the state-owned OCP since its foundation as a phosphate mining town under the protectorate. In 2008, the OCP turned into a public limited company and consequently sought to restructure its workforce, attempting to outsource 850 workers (Chawqui 2010). The CDT was the dominant confederation in the OCP, but as these workers felt it had not represented their interests properly, they started a new workplace union with the UMT. They went on strike demanding direct hiring, while the OCP dismissed them. In 2009 and 2010, the police repeatedly attacked their sit-ins and made several arrests. The stand-off ended with the direct hiring of all workers in early 2011, when, as will be shown below, the regime accommodated several socioeconomic demands to avert political strife.

In the meantime, as inflation surged, strikes in public administration began to mount. Unlike in Tunisia, where the only general strike between independence and the 2011 uprising was bloodily repressed, in Morocco the general strike had become a common occurrence. However, the Moroccan unions did not have enough power to significantly alter state policy.

On 13 February 2008, the UMT and the FDT held a general strike in public administration, demanding the indexation of wages to inflation, an increase in the quota of promotions, adherence to the national minimum wage for the lowest echelons of public administration, and other improvements. However, the government, while unilaterally granting modest wage increases, stopped well short of satisfying the unions' demands (see *La vie éco*, 25 April 2008 and 2 May 2008). Therefore, on 13 May 2008, the two confederations were joined by the UNTM in repeating the strike. The UGTM did not take part in the initiative because the government at the time was led by the *Istiqlal* SG Abbas El-Fassi. The CDT instead held a general strike on 21 May 2008.

Public sector workers' discontent persisted the following year. On 23 January 2009, the UMT and the FDT held a fresh general strike in public administration to protest against the ineffectiveness of social dialogue. On 10 February 2009, the strike was repeated, this time with the participation of the CDT. Despite the strikes, the government refused to discuss wage increases and exceptional promotions (*La vie éco*, 1 May 2009). Instead, it opted for a decrease in the income tax, which left the unions

unsatisfied (*La vie éco*, 23 October 2009).[306]

In 2010, the government continued to refuse to discuss wage increases, leading the unions to hold a public administration general strike on 3 March 2010 (FDT, UMT, UNTM) and to temporarily withdraw from the public sector social dialogue commission on 21 June 2010 (*La vie éco*, 2 July 2010). The government, for its part, cancelled the autumn social dialogue round, as the economic downturn discouraged concessions (*La vie éco*, 8 October 2010).

Meanwhile, in September 2010, the Ministry of Justice employees under the FDT's guidance started a campaign of weekly strikes to demand promotions and a new professional statute. In the same period, the public "urban agencies" also witnessed a series of strikes led by the FDT. On 3 November 2010, the FDT, the UMT, the UGTM, and the UNTM held yet another public sector general strike, protesting against the "emptying out" of social dialogue and demanding higher wages, but the government refused once again (*La vie éco*, 5 November 2010).

In this tense context, UMT SG Mahjoub Ben Seddik died on 17 September 2010, which opened the way for a new Congress. As mentioned before, no Congress had been held since 1995. During this time, the UMT Left had significantly expanded its presence in the union, and it thus sought to translate its rank-and-file influence into access to the NEC. This was a first, as Ben Seddik had never tolerated overt opponents in the NEC. Of course, the fact that an SG other than Ben Seddik would be elected was also unprecedented in the history of the union. This probably pushed the incumbent leadership to compromise with the Left, which sought a series of reforms for the union's democratisation, such as transparency in financial matters and in the selection of delegates for international missions.

A commission was charged with the organisation of the Congress, including the quotas of delegates coming from each region and sector. A UMT-FNE trade unionist commented: "I want to the underline the fact that there were no [formal] meetings to elect delegates".[307] There was, however, no reported direct pressure by the authorities on the delegates' selection and, in fact, the radical Left was represented.

[306] In the autumn social dialogue rounds, the topic of the discussions were the laws on the right to strike, trade unions, work accidents, and severance pay, but the social partners could not find an agreement on any of these.
[307] Interview 26.

The UMT 10th Congress was held in the Casablanca HQ on 11-12 December 2010.[308] The Commission for Candidatures agreed on a consensual list for the Administrative Commission, so that there was no competing list. The Administrative Commission then elected a NEC that included three UMT Left leaders: Abdelhamid Amin and Khadija Ghamiri from the UMT-FNSA and Abderrazak Drissi from the UMT-FNE. While the three leftists were from Rabat, the other twelve members hailed from Casablanca, and no other regional union was represented in the NEC. The new SG was Miloudi Moukharik, aide to the late Ben Seddik, from the UMT-OFPPT. Its vice-SG was Farouk Chahir from the UMT-USIB, who would later become implicated in a corruption scandal that concerned the banking national insurance fund (see Chapter 3).

The Congress also approved a new internal statute, as the original one had long fallen into disuse. It is likely that the draft of the statute was mostly the work of the leftist activists and it contained many of the reforms for which they had been campaigning, such as the two-term limit on the SG's tenure, the gender and youth quotas, the establishment of a Financial Commission to fight corruption and mismanagement, and the creation of a Discipline Commission to formalise and regulate internal sanctions (UMT 2011a). The new statute delegated the Administrative Commission to write a more detailed internal regulation. However, most of these provisions remained dead letters and the internal regulation was never written.[309]

In any case, the UMT 10th Congress marked an unprecedented display of influence by the union Left. The UMT Left would attempt to use its power bases within the union to rally the labour movement in support of the 2011 mobilisations and unify the protests by precarious workers, private sector waged workers, and public administration workers around the M20Fev's demands, but its efforts were unable to substantially change the compromising line of Morocco's labour confederations.

6.2 The Trade Unions and the M20Fev

This section examines how the Palace was able to use the flexibility of Morocco's

[308] Reportedly, a total of 1,732 delegates participated, although the number initially established by the organisational commission was 1,253 (*Le matin*, 14 December 2010).
[309] A leftist union leader even complained that the list of the Administrative Commission's members, who were supposed to write the internal regulation, was never available to union cadres (Interview 35).

labour institutions (party mediation, trade union fragmentation, and social dialogue) to distance the labour movement from the M20Fev and channel its grievances into institutionalised outlets. Moreover, relatively low working-class power and the absence of former populist entitlements contributed to the fact that the various strands of social unrest did not coalesce into sustained and widespread anti-regime rioting as in Tunisia. The unions thus faced weaker pressures from below and, in addition, they did not feel strong enough to take radical action for democratisation. Most trade unions, while initially showing sympathy towards the M20Fev's demands, eventually adhered to the Palace-led constitutional reform.

The 2011 Moroccan uprising was not just constituted by the actions of the M20Fev but also by several mobilisations by precarious and secure workers. In 2011, strikes rose again (see Graph 10, p. 192) and several movements of the precarious mounted. In January and February 2011, strikes were threatened or carried out by several groups of workers, including miners, CNSS employees, dockers, tax collectors, and teachers. Ministry of Justice employees continued to hold weekly strikes. In Salé, 1,500 workers protested after the British textile multinational Mornatex abandoned the country without giving legal severance pay (*Reuters*, 16 March 2011).

In the meantime, solidarity protests with the Tunisian uprising surfaced. Several Moroccan leftist organisations coalesced under the umbrella of the *Coordination Marocaine de Soutien aux Démocrates Tunisiens*. On 13 January 2011, the *Coordination* held a sit-in – violently dispersed by the police – in front of the Tunisian embassy in Rabat (Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeghllaly 2012, p. 877). After Ben Ali's downfall, discussions on how to broaden the mobilisations spread online as well as in physical meetings, while the solidarity protests started to focus on the Egyptian uprising.

On 27 January 2011, a first call to demonstrate for a "constitutional monarchy" was posted on Facebook by a small group of youths, and it circulated widely. On 12 February 2011, a coalition of leftist organisations drafted a new platform with a list of political and socioeconomic demands and a call to demonstrate on 20 February 2011 in every Moroccan city. This coalition had three main poles, the weight of which varied depending on the location. One pole was the "electoral Left": the PSU, the PADS, and the CNI, which together formed the FdG (see Chapter 5). Another pole was the "extra-parliamentary Left" that did not participate in the elections: *Ennahj* and

Al-Mounadil-a (the latter mainly through *ATTAC Maroc*). The third pole was constituted by independent participants, many of whom embraced activism for the first time. A fourth pole of the movement emerged when, on 16 February 2011, the youth of the Islamist organisation AwI joined the platform. In the list of demands, the expression "constitutional monarchy" was discarded in favour of the call for a "democratic constitution". This formulation was made to accommodate both the supporters of a constitutional monarchy (the FdG) and the "republicans" (*Ennahj*, *Al-Mounadil-a*, and AwI).[310] Most Marxist-Leninist "basists" would eventually refuse to join the M20Fev because they rejected cooperating with AwI's Islamists, which contributes to explaining the lesser role of left-wing student unionism and of the ANDCM in the movement, given the basists' substantial presence in these domains.[311]

On 20 February 2011, about 120,000 demonstrated across the country (Vairel 2014). The police, differently from the other North African countries, mostly tolerated the protests. However, clashes – mainly involving precarious youths – erupted in several cities (*Libération*, 22 and 23 February 2011).[312] Police intervention caused the death of Karim Chaib in Sefrou and probably five more deaths in Al Hoceima.[313] In the following days, the police disbanded several gatherings and made tens of arrests. The M20Fev established local groups in most cities of the country and held periodic mass protests demanding social justice and democracy.[314] Each branch organised locally in slightly different ways, but everywhere the decision-making processes were assembly-based. In Casablanca, where the movement was largest, demonstrations were held weekly. An M20Fev National Support Committee, based in Rabat and including about one hundred associations and political parties, was established. The Support Committee gave a formal role to the organisations that adhered to the movement, but it did not have official leadership capacities. Despite the absence of a national executive body, the M20Fev steadily staged nationwide demonstrations, the largest being those of 20 March and 24 April 2011.

The M20Fev's rise coincided with a new surge of mobilisations and strikes across the private sector – from agricultural workers and fishermen to miners and

[310] Interviews 2, 3, 5.
[311] Interviews 15, 22, 34.
[312] Most notably Al Hoceima, Fes, Guelmim, Larache, Marrakesh, Sefrou, Tetouan, and Tangier.
[313] The latter event was presented as a failed bank robbery and has never been clarified.
[314] See Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeghllaly 2012; Desrues 2013; Fernández-Molina 2011; Hoffmann and König 2013; Lawrence 2016; Vairel 2014.

manufacturing workers. The strikes also affected the service sector, most visibly transport but also other branches such as tourism and telecommunications. If the number of lost workdays remained below the 2009 figure, the number of strikes was far higher (474 versus 231), suggesting that a growing part of the workers who mobilised belonged to smaller firms without a previous history of unionisation. As a leftist activist from Agadir observed:

> The M20Fev and the climate of struggle that emerged in 2011 had an impact on trade unionism. Because there are several examples, here in Agadir, of factories that didn't use to have a union and they got unionised in this context. […] There was an awakening of grievances, some in sectors that hadn't seen struggles for a long time. (Interview 19)

On some occasions, the M20Fev became directly involved in supporting labour strikes. For example, in Agadir the M20Fev lent its active backing to the strikes in the food factories Fresh Express and Doha.[315] While the Fresh Express new union representatives were fired along with the workers who defended them, the Doha workplace union resisted until 2015, before meeting the same fate.

An important workplace mobilisation that involved M20Fev was that of Mohammedia's oil refinery SAMIR, which culminated in a strike on 26 August 2011. A CDT leader commented:

> Before [2011], we were unable to gather the SAMIR workforce behind our demands. But, as the M20Fev grew, we took advantage of the situation to organise inside and outside. The CDT was part of the M20Fev at the local and national level, since 20 February 2011. […] The movement was fresh air for civil rights in general, and trade union freedoms are part of it. […] The M20Fev was with us [in the SAMIR strike] and we were with them. (Interview 32)

[315] Interview 34.

Despite the M20Fev's support, three CDT trade unionists were fired after the strike and their demands were only partially met (a sign that, in late 2011, the situation was already on the way towards normalisation).

In the early months of 2011, groups of public sector workers also continued to strike or protest, including teachers, doctors, engineers, postal workers, airport workers, railway workers, land registry employees, OFPPT employees, and local administrations employees. Ministry of Justice employees also returned on strike.

These workplace struggles coincided with a surge in mobilisations by the precarious. The latter included unemployed graduates demanding public sector jobs, outsourced workers reclaiming direct hiring, squatters illegally occupying lands to build informal settlements, and informal street vendors requesting space for their businesses. Unemployed graduates from the whole country concentrated again in Rabat to demand public administration jobs. In Khouribga, there was a long movement of the unemployed demanding work in the OCP. On 21 February 2011, Khouribga's unemployed started a permanent sit-in in front of the local OCP offices, which was disbanded by the police on 15 March 2011 (*Libération*, 16 March 2011). In the following months, the unemployed staged blockades of phosphate trains and occasionally clashed with the police (see Bogaert 2015). The workers employed in outsourced companies working for the OCP also recurred to similar practices to demand direct hiring (*Libération*, 17 May 2011). In August, the unemployed of the coastal town of Safi, where the OCP has a phosphate processing complex, also staged protests for jobs, blocking trains and clashing with the police (*Libération*, 3 August 2011).

Faced with large protests and high regional instability, the regime attempted to defuse popular unrest through the mix of political opening and repression that it had experimented with since the 1990s. A crucial element in this strategy was the separation between the "political" M20Fev and the "apolitical" protests for immediate socioeconomic needs. This separation was itself political, as it obscured the fact that the substantial and long-term satisfaction of socioeconomic demands was incompatible with the political system in place. For instance, on 10 February 2011, representatives of the government and of some unemployed graduates groups met to define a roadmap for the fulfilment of the latter's demands. A few days later, the *Istiqlal*'s newspaper announced that: "The unemployed high cadres reject all political

exploitation of their social demands" (*L'opinion*, 16 February 2011a).[316] This type of discourse – presenting socioeconomic demands as legitimate and political demands as driven by shady and opportunistic machinations – became very common in the media establishment. Later, the government issued a decree that allowed the extraordinary recruitment of unemployed graduates in public administration (*Libération*, 4 March 2011). In March, the executive committed to hire 4,300 holders of a PhD or a master's degree with no recruitment exam (*La vie éco*, 11 March 2011). This strategy proved effective. Not only the apolitical groups of unemployed graduates stayed away from the M20Fev, but also the relations between the M20Fev and the leftist ANDCM deteriorated, with the latter quitting the National Support Committee after the 20 March 2011 demonstration. While many individual ANDCM members and some local sections remained active in the M20Fev, the overall contribution of the unemployed graduates to the movement was severely curtailed (see Bono 2015; Emperador 2011).

On 14 February 2011, the *Istiqlali* PM Abbas El-Fassi met with the opposition parties and announced a series of socioeconomic concessions: the doubling of the budget for consumption subsidies (15 billion dirhams were added to the 17 billion already allocated in the 2011 budget), the hiring of unemployed graduates in public administration, and the reopening of social dialogue with the unions (*L'opinion*, 16 February 2011b). On the same day, the Ministry of Justice employees were offered an agreement that promised to fulfil their demands (*Ibidem*). Additionally, the CGEM was mobilised to participate in the governmental initiatives to boost employment (*Libération*, 26 February 2011).

On 18 February 2011, Khouribga's 850 outsourced OCP workers who had been demanding direct hiring for years were suddenly accommodated (*Actuel*, 7 October 2011). Subsequently, the local unemployed movement refused to join the M20Fev because it did not want to be "politicised".[317] On 4 May 2011, the OCP launched a training and employment programme called OCP Skills, committing itself to hiring 5,800 unemployed people (*Libération*, 6 May 2011). According to an interviewee, 3,700 unemployed workers were effectively hired after the training, while the rest continued to protest.[318]

[316] Translated from French by the author.
[317] Interviews 22, 31.
[318] Interview 31.

On 21 February 2011, Mohammed VI inaugurated the ESC (see Chapter 3) with the participation of the trade unions' representatives (*L'opinion*, 23 February 2011). The creation of the ESC had been underway since 2009, but it is plausible that the choice of this date for its inauguration was a political manoeuvre. An M20Fev activist commented:

> The day after [20 February 2011], the King invited the leaders of the most representative unions. This was clear. It was necessary [for the regime] to calm down social conflict, it had to distance the unions and the workers from the mass movement. Because there are no limits in the streets. The workers that are crushed every day in isolation had to be stopped from joining the M20Fev, which […] struggled in different ways against the King's dominance. (Interview 34)

On 27 February 2011, the royal counsellor Mohamed Mouatassim met with the SGs of the country's five largest unions: the UMT, CDT, FDT, UGTM, and UNTM (*Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 3 March 2011). The SNESup SG was also present. The exact content of the meeting is unknown, but Mouatassim announced Mohammed VI's willingness to satisfy the unions' demands and to resolve the deadlock whereby social dialogue with the government had stalled. This move featured the typical strategy of placing the blame on the government, the parliament, and the political parties, rather than on the Palace, despite the fact that the latter is actually more influential in the politics and the economy of the country.

The new social dialogue started on 4 April 2011, with the participation of the UMT, FDT, UGTM, UNTM, and CGEM. The CDT initially boycotted the negotiations, but it eventually joined after the first bargaining rounds. The central point were the wage hikes that had long been demanded by the unions, along with an improvement in old-age pensions (*La vie éco*, 8 April 2011). However, bonuses and internal promotions were also discussed in the public sector commission (*Libération*, 7 April 2011), while trade union freedoms, health insurance, social security coverage, and severance pay were touched upon in the private sector commission (*Libération*, 9 April 2011).

The most important governmental proposals were a general wage hike of 500 dirhams in public administration, a 10% increase in the minimum wage, the increase

in the minimum old-age pension from 600 dirhams to 1,000 dirhams for the public sector and from 600 dirhams to 800 dirhams for the private sector, and the promotion of 28% of public employees (*La vie éco*, 22 April 2011). These concessions were extraordinary in the history of the country, but the unions rejected them, stating that they were not enough (*Libération*, 18 April 2011 and 27 April 2011).

The social dialogue ended on the night of 26 April 2011 with the signature of a generous list of concessions, the most important being:

-An immediate net raise of 600 dirhams (77.6 USD at the time) per month for all public administration employees.

-An increase in the minimum old-age pension from 600 dirhams to 1,000 dirhams (129.4 USD at the time).

-An increase in the internal promotion quota in public administration to 30% in July 2011 and 33% in January 2012.

-A 15% increase in the minimum wage, 10% in 1 July 2011 and 5% in January 2012.

-A commitment to generalise the above increase to all private sector wages (unimplemented).

-The improvement and enlargement – through various specific measures – of social security, health coverage, and social services, particularly social housing (partially implemented).

-The abolishment of the difference between the agricultural minimum wage and the non-agricultural minimum wage (unimplemented).

-The adoption of a new wage grid in public administration (unimplemented).

-The commitment by the government to promulgate a new law on, and audit all, insurance funds (unimplemented).

-The ratification of ILO conventions number 87 on trade union freedoms, number 102 on social security coverage, and number 141 on agricultural workers' trade unions, as well as the suppression of Article 288 of the Penal Code (all unimplemented).

As indicated, the implementation of these concessions was uneven, and its extent is hard to precisely determine. For example, as the USFP's daily commented at the time: "It is necessary to be reminded that the implementation of the minimum wage

is still a dream in an important portion of the national economy" (*Libération*, 28 April 2011).[319] However, the exceptional largesse of the 2011 social dialogue is indisputable, at least for what concerns public administration employees. It is important to underline that the unions had thus far been unable to win these concessions despite several public sector general strikes. It was regional instability and mounting social unrest that pushed the regime to accommodate them, with the implicit requirement that they renounce radical political opposition.

The general economic concessions awarded through the social dialogue were complemented by a series of sectorial concessions. Mohammed VI himself ordered an increase in the agricultural minimum wage and in the wages of the army and security forces (*Libération*, 28 April 2011). Various groups of public sector workers who had mobilised for sectorial demands were to some extent accommodated, the most visible examples being teachers, doctors, railwaymen, engineers, Ministry of Justice employees, and OCP employees. Additionally, an ameliorative agreement for bank employees was reached by the UMT-USIB and the national banking association. Several trade unionists and labour activists noticed an improvement in trade union freedoms in the private sector, with an upsurge in the creation of workplace unions and an unusual share of union representatives spared from dismissal.[320] There was also a higher tolerance for the occupation of spaces by squatters and informal vendors.

The three largest confederations (the UMT, CDT, and FDT) initially endorsed the M20Fev. The UMT and the CDT were also part of the M20Fev National Support Committee, along with the smaller union ODT. The UMT and the CDT made some of their resources available to the movement, most visibly their buildings. Only the fourth confederation, the *Istiqlal*-linked UGTM, refused to provide its support from the beginning because it had no interest in backing a movement that was embarrassing a government led by the party it was affiliated with. Indeed, the *Istiqlal*'s newspaper, on the eve of 20 February 2011, published an UGTM statement with the title: "20 February Demonstration Call: The UGTM Boycotts All Calls to Illegal Demonstrations; The Homeland First, The Homeland Always" (*L'opinion*, 19 February 2011).[321] The PJD, and thus the UNTM, adopted a more nuanced position. Although they did not officially adhere to the protests, they used them as a bargaining

[319] Translated from French by the author.
[320] Interviews 7, 10, 19, 37.
[321] Translated from French by the author.

chip and thus they abstained from condemning them out of hand. Some of the party youth formed a group called *Baraka* (Blessing) and initially participated in the M20Fev mobilisations with the support of several party leaders.

On 9 March 2011, Mohammed VI announced a constitutional reform that addressed, to a limited extent, the M20Fev's demands. The following day, he appointed the Consultative Commission for the Reform of the Constitution, charged with drafting the new text. The Commission had 19 members and was presided over by Abdeltif Menouni.[322] Along with the Commission, the Palace established a Political Mechanism for Monitoring and Consultation presided over by Mohamed Mouatassim. The Mechanism was meant to allow political parties, civil society associations, and the trade unions to present their proposals for constitutional reform and voice their opinions on the drafts presented by the Commission. The five largest trade unions (the UMT, CDT, FDT, UGTM, and UNTM) all participated in it.

The M20Fev, however, refused the Palace's roadmap since it maintained that the new constitution had to be drafted by a democratically elected constitutional assembly and not by a committee appointed by Mohammed VI. This is why the M20Fev did not participate in the Mechanism despite being invited. On 13 March 2011, a large demonstration in Casablanca against the roadmap was brutally attacked by the police, who also invaded the PSU HQ where many protesters had sought refuge. During the attack, Mohamed Diidia – FDT representative in the Chamber of Councillors – was also beaten by the police (*La vie éco*, 18 March 2011b). Yet the USFP, which had supported the M20Fev after its initial success, decided to engage in the political process sponsored by Mohammed VI. This gradually distanced the socialists and their associated union FDT from the movement. On 22 June 2011, the FDT leaders held an extraordinary meeting to declare their support for a Yes vote in the constitutional referendum to be held on 1 July 2011 (*Libération*, 24 June 2011). The PJD, and thus the UNTM, also adhered to the Palace's roadmap.

The UMT initially issued a statement endorsing the M20Fev's demands as legitimate (UMT 2011b). The UMT Left attempted to rally the whole confederation in full support of the M20Fev. It did so most effectively in Rabat, where its control of the Regional EC allowed it to make the union building available to the M20Fev for

[322] In his youth, Menouni had been an opponent of the regime, UNEM SG, a founder of the CDT, and a major expert on Moroccan trade unionism. He would be appointed as royal counsellor on 3 August 2011.

assemblies, events, and related activities. The Rabat UMT also created the network "Trade unionists for the M20Fev", attempting to link labour unrest with the movement for democracy. The network had, however, a relatively limited impact. The UMT NEC half-heartedly accepted these initiatives, but the rupture came in the run up to the referendum for the approval of the new constitution. The final draft of the new constitution was announced on 17 June 2011. The M20Fev took to the streets again on 19 June calling for a boycott of the referendum, as the proposed text – despite its concessions – left crucial powers to the Palace (see Benchemsi 2012). The UMT Left demanded that the confederation remain neutral on the referendum but, on 21 June 2011, the UMT NEC publicly endorsed a Yes vote (UMT 2011c). This decision possibly resulted from pressures emanating from the Palace, but it is not surprising given the compromising position long held by the UMT's traditional leadership.

The CDT thus remained the only confederation siding with the M20Fev and boycotting the constitutional referendum. Moreover, on 7 June 2011, the CDT (along with the PADS and the CNI) polemically withdrew from the Political Mechanism for Monitoring and Consultation (*Le matin,* 8 June 2011). However, the CDT did not promote its opposition through radical actions such as regional or national general strikes. Most M20Fev militants interviewed for this research argued that the CDT's support became timid because the confederation "sold out" by participating in the social dialogue and accepting material concessions with the implicit condition of abandoning radical political opposition.[323] For example, an M20Fev activist from Casablanca said:

> The unions signed the 26 April agreement and left the M20Fev. […] Even if the CDT boycotted [the referendum], even if it didn't quit the M20Fev with an official declaration… In the streets you could only find those CDT militants that were always on the M20Fev's side. But, if we speak of what I call the union bureaucracy, they made a compromise and thus left the streets. (Interview 2)

[323] It should be reiterated that the historical strategic disagreement that led to the split of the CDT from the UMT revolved around the relationship between economic and political demands, with the CDT accusing the UMT of prioritising the former. However, the CDT would have probably lost legitimacy in the face of many of its members had it given up on this opportunity to participate in the negotiation of unprecedented economic gains (Interview 20).

Whatever the plausibility of these claims, the crucial fact is that the CDT alone did not have the power to call for a successful general strike. In fact, the second largest union of the country had a self-declared membership of 61,500 (0.6% of the employed), hardly enough to change the political equilibrium.

Meanwhile, since March 2011, repression against the M20Fev had intensified. Police charges against M20Fev demonstrations became common, even more so after the 28 April terrorist bombing in Marrakesh was used as a justification for prioritising law and order. Additionally, in mid-2011, Ministry of the Interior officials stepped up the practice of "outsourcing" repression to informal militias (called "*baltajis*", i.e. thugs), charged with harassing the protesters. The movement thus decided to start holding protests in the popular neighbourhoods to break the routine of foreseeable marches in the city centres.

On 15 May 2011, the M20Fev national demonstration in Temara was brutally dispersed before it could begin and, the following Sunday, the police attacked M20Fev protests across the country (*Libération*, 24 May 2011). On 26 May 2011, two movement leaders and CDT cadres – Seddik Kabbouri and Chenou Mehjoub – were jailed along with eight youths after being accused of having incited violence during a demonstration held in Bouarfa on 18 May 2011, which ended in clashes with the police (*Libération*, 9 June 2011). The M20Fev in Bouarfa reacted with a local general strike and a series of public actions, but, on 17 June 2011, the accused were handed prison sentences of up to three years (*Libération*, 20 June 2011). On 29 May 2011, after new attacks on the movement, the AwI and M20Fev militant Kamal Amari was beaten to death by police in Safi.

The new constitution passed, on 1 July 2011, with 98.5% approval and a voter turnout of 72.4%.[324] The constitutional referendum set the stage for the early elections held on 25 November 2011. The Islamist PJD won a plurality and was thus allowed for the first time to form a government. The early elections spelled the closure of the window of opportunity that had opened in early 2011.

Most of the interviewed M20Fev activists did not hide their scorn towards the compromising line held by the trade unions. These quotes are quite representative:

[324] The accuracy of the latter figure has, however, been contested by a number of observers. In fact, the Moroccan authorities calculate voter turnout on the basis of the electoral roll, which had 13 million registered voters, while the voting age population was estimated at 21 million (Desrues 2012).

> The unions had an ambiguous position towards the M20Fev. The support was there, but it wasn't substantial. The CDT and the UMT just gave their buildings. But for what concerns the workers' mobilisations, the strikes… they took advantage [of the movement] to get the concessions of the 26 April agreement, the 600 dirhams for the public administration employees. The agreement has to be contextualised, it was part of the monarchy's attempt to get the constitutional reform through. (Interview 25)

> I have to say, because the unions are the topic of your thesis, that the labour movement is what we missed. The M20Fev was really a combative struggle that opened new horizons, but the car can't move forward without four wheels. (Interview 34)

Some activists also related the compromising choices of the union leaders to the general weakness of contemporary Moroccan trade unionism:

> I don't think the unions represent the workers here [in Morocco]. If we analyse things historically, the unions have had an important role in the past, they used to be very influential. But with time, their role has diminished little by little and trade union density is lower than ever, 3% by now [3.2% of total employment]. They can't be influential, because 97% of the workers don't care about what goes on in the unions. So, if they can't give concrete answers to the workers' problems, how are they going to play a role in the movement or influence general public opinion? (Interview 15)

The trade union leaders' choices were thus influenced not only by the regime's dexterity in using Morocco's flexible system of labour institutions to distance them from the M20Fev, but also by the relatively low level of working-class power existing in the country. As workers' protests remained fragmented and did not escalate, the unions faced weaker pressure from below to mount a strategy of radical confrontation, and – in any case – their limited resources would have made such a strategy costlier and less likely to succeed.

6.3 The Regime's Search for New Stability

With the decline of the struggles within and without the workplace, the regime moved to retrench many of the concessions it had given in 2011 to defuse unrest. The trade unions protested vehemently against austerity and the gaps in the application of the 26 April agreement, but their repeated general strikes were unable to change the regime's course of action, which preserved its undemocratic nature.

After the elections, the M20Fev began to gradually lose steam. On 18 December 2011, AwI announced its withdrawal from the movement. By the end of 2012, M20Fev demonstrations had become rare. However, throughout the year, localised socioeconomic protests continued, with clashes taking place in Beni Mellal, Khouribga, Marrakesh, Mohammedia, the Rif, Sidi Ifni, Tangier, and Taza (see Desrues and Fernández-Molina 2013). In the Southern commune of Imider, a social movement that had started in 2011 demands, to this day, an end to the environmental degradation caused by the local silver mine owned by Mohammed VI through the Managem group (see Bouhmouch and Bailey 2015).

The PJD's electoral victory would not have been possible without the M20Fev. In fact, the Palace had backed the recently formed PAM as a governmental alternative to the PJD, but the early elections and the discrediting of the PAM, precipitated by the 2011 mobilisations, upset these plans. In January 2012, Benkirane finalised the composition of his government – including the *Istiqlal*, the *Mouvement Populaire*,[325] and the ex-communist PPS.

When Benkirane took charge, he faced a state budget in dire straits. The socioeconomic concessions that the regime had handed out in 2011 to isolate the M20Fev had not been accompanied by measures aiming at making them sustainable (e.g. a redistributive tax reform, a crackdown on high-level corruption, a repudiation of external debt, etc.). By 2012, the public administration wage bill had climbed to 11.4% of GDP and public expenditure on consumption subsidies had risen to an extraordinary 6.5% of GDP,[326] resulting in a budget deficit of 6.8% in the same year (Ministry of Economy). To address the situation, in August 2012, Morocco agreed with the IMF a Precautionary and Liquidity Line programme, with a $6.2 billion

[325] The *Mouvement Populaire* is a right-wing, monarchist, and Amazigh-oriented party founded in 1957.

[326] In 2009, the public administration wage bill represented 10.1% of GDP and public expenditure for food subsidies represented only 1.8% of GDP (Ministry of the Economy).

loan.[327] In doing so, parallel to Tunisia, the government committed the country to a new round of neoliberal measures.

Benkirane's two governments[328] made exams mandatory for recruitment to public administration, declared that public administration would withhold wages from striking employees, lifted fuel subsidies without substituting them with direct cash transfers, left some of the provisions of the 2011 social dialogue agreement unimplemented (see above), and provided the minimum further concessions to public sector workers. By 2016, the public administration wage bill and consumption subsidies had been brought back to roughly their pre-uprising levels, 10.3% and 1.4% of GDP respectively (Ministry of Economy).

In substance, Benkirane was obliged to directly or indirectly roll back many of the socioeconomic concessions of 2011 to comply with the international financial institutions' requirement of reducing the state budget. Regarding the significance of the political concessions established with the new Constitution, Benkirane himself had a chance to test it when, after the 2016 elections, Mohammed VI discarded him as PM despite the fact that he was the leader of the party that had obtained the relative majority.

The unemployed graduates were among the first to experience the effects of the new round of austerity. Over one hundred holders of PhDs or master's degrees protested over their exclusion from work in public administration despite the 2011 agreements (*Libération*, 12 December 2011). On 18 January 2012, one day before the presentation of the governmental programme to the parliament, three unemployed graduates set themselves on fire during a protest in Rabat (*Libération*, 20 January 2012). One of them, Abdelwahab Zeidoun, aged 27, died as a result on 24 January.

Another visible group who mobilised nationally against governmental policy, in late 2015 and early 2016, was that of the trainee teachers, who held an open-ended strike and large national demonstrations against two decrees by the Ministry of Education (*Tel quel*, 16 January 2016). The first decree made recruitment after the training period conditional upon an exam and the second decree halved the trainees' scholarship. The trade unions played a role as mediators between the striking trainees and the government. The movement ended with the 13 April 2016 agreement, in which

[327] This would be followed by an additional $5 billion loan in 2014 and a $3.5 billion loan in 2016.
[328] In July 2013, the *Istiqlal* withdrew its support from the government. Therefore, Benkirane formed a new government in which the RNI substituted the *Istiqlal*.

the government modified the decrees so that they would not apply to the current trainees. However, about 150 trainee teachers, reportedly including the leaders of the movement, were eventually not hired (see Hayns 2017).

The unions too expressed their frustration over the government's refusals to accommodate their demands (see also Desrues 2015). On 27 April 2013, all the largest unions – with the unsurprising exception of the PJD-linked UNTM – boycotted the spring session of the social dialogue, claiming that the government had emptied social dialogue of meaning and refused to complete the implementation of the 26 April 2011 agreement (*La vie éco,* 3 May 2013). In late 2013, the government started planning a reform of the retirement system, involving an increase in the retirement age and the contributions paid by the workers, which further worried the unions. Another difficult point were the organic laws on strikes and trade unions, on which the unions, the CGEM, and the government could not find an agreement.[329]

In 2014, social dialogue continued to stall, despite the fact that the government unilaterally mandated a 10% increase in the nominal minimum wage. On 23 September 2014, the UGTM and the FDT led by Fatihi[330] held a public sector general strike against the pension reform, the public administration wage freeze, the increases in fuel, electricity, and water prices, the lack of trade union freedoms, and the government's disregard for social dialogue (*Libération*, 18 September 2014). On 29 October 2014, all the largest unions, with the exception of the UNTM, held a general strike in both the public and private sectors (*Le matin*, 28 October 2014). It was probably the largest general strike in Morocco's recent history, but – after the end of the M20Fev and the 2011 Arab uprisings – the government no longer felt compelled to make speedy concessions and simply postponed all decisions to the social dialogue rounds of the following year.

However, the spring 2015 social dialogue also failed to satisfy the unions' demands (*La vie éco*, 30 April 2015). In the following months, the largest unions (except the UNTM) organised several protests against the government. On 10 December 2015 and 24 February 2016, the UMT, CDT, UGTM, FDT, and other smaller unions held two more general strikes, the first in public administration and the

[329] These laws, despite being mandated by the 2004 Labour Code, have yet to be promulgated.
[330] By that time, the FDT had divided into a current led by Abdelhamid Fatihi and another led by Abderrahmane Azzouzi, both claiming to be the only legitimate representatives of the confederation. As a result, the FDT was excluded from the most representative unions after the 2015 professional elections.

second in all sectors. *La Vie Éco* commented: "Abdelilah Benkirane, being aware of the relatively weak mobilisation capacity of the unions, lets them carry on" (*La vie éco*, 8 December 2015).[331] On 31 May 2016, after the spring social dialogue meetings failed to produce an agreement, the unions held a new public administration general strike. However, on 20 July 2016, the parliament approved the pension reform proposed by the government, removing the main point of contention between the latter and the unions.

The withdrawal of the 2011 socioeconomic concessions did not manifest itself in government policy only. Several of the interviewed trade unionists and labour activists lamented that, if in 2011 there was a relative opening of trade union freedoms in the private sector, this window gradually closed in the following years.[332]

The activist from Agadir quoted above stated:

> The main gains that came out of the 20 February context benefited especially the public administration workers, or those in very large firms like the OCP and the banks. But now inflation is eroding these improvements more and more, and there are still some points of the 2011 social dialogue agreement that were not implemented. In private sector manufacturing, after the ebb of the M20Fev, there was a counteroffensive that basically took everything away. (Interview 19)

Numerous reports of violations of trade union freedoms emerged during this research, from the Tangier Free Zone to agribusiness in Souss, from manufacturing and call centres in Casablanca to mining in the South or local administration employees in Fes. Three of the severest examples are reported below: APM Terminals, the Bou-Azzer mines, and the case of Wafa Sharaf.

On 28 May 2012, APM Terminals – the multinational company managing and jointly owning the Tanger-Med Phase I container terminal – signed a non-binding accord with the UMT workplace union led by Said Elhairech (*La vie éco*, 15 June 2012). However, on 16 June 2012, Elhairech and his fellow UMT trade unionist Mohamed Chamchati were placed in preventive detention on suspicion of forming a

[331] Translated from French by the author.
[332] Interviews 10, 19, 30, 32, 37, 46.

criminal gang, undermining the security of the state, and violating the right to work in a different industrial dispute (AFL-CIO 2012). This triggered an international solidarity campaign, such that Elhairech was liberated in October 2012 and Chamchati was set free in November. Elhairech confirmed that his arrest on trumped up charges was linked to his activism at APM Terminals: "I was accused of threatening national security because of the Tanger-Med port industrial action. We are supposed to have the right to strike in Morocco, but it doesn't work in practice" (ITF 2012). In February 2013, Elhairech and Chamchati were sentenced to one year and two and a half years imprisonment respectively based on Article 288 of the Penal Code (ITF 2013). While Elhairech appealed his conviction, this is a clear example of judiciary repression of trade union freedoms.

In April 2012, a group of outsourced miners working in the Bou-Azzer cobalt mines in the Ouarzazate region started a strike against multiple violations of the labour law by the subcontracting firm Agzoumi, contracted by the Managem group (owned by the King). The mine remained blocked until June 2012, but the strike was then repressed (*L'économiste*, 8 November 2012). On 15 October 2012, the CDT held a local general strike to protest against the trial of eight strikers accused of violating the right to work under Article 288 of the Penal Code and the dismissal of 21 strikers (*L'économiste*, 17 October 2012). On 16 November 2012, Hamid Majdi, a member of the CDT Local EC, was arrested as drugs were "found" in his car (ATMF 2012). Majdi and other Ouarzazate trade unionists were handed prison sentences ranging from six months to one year (*Histoires ordinaires*, 3 June 2014).

On 27 April 2014, the AMDH and *Ennahj* activist Wafa Sharaf visited a sit-in of workers protesting against their illegal layoff by the industrial packaging multinational Grief, in Tangier. According to Sharaf, she was then followed and beaten by plainclothes police officers. After having reported the assault, she was first sentenced to one year in prison for false allegations of torture, and when she appealed she was sentenced to two years (*HuffPost Maghreb*, 11 July 2016). Sharaf was only freed on 10 July 2016.

Other cases of severe repression of trade union freedoms are noticeable because, if they did not involve heavy prison sentences, they led to the dismissal of very high numbers of strikers who had tried to defend their union representatives. Three examples are Agadir's food factory Doha, Casablanca's steel mill Maghreb

Steel, and Tangier's paper factory Med Paper (see also ITUC 2017).[333] In all three cases, the companies fired the representatives of a recently created workplace union. When other workers struck, demanding the rehiring of their illegally dismissed union representatives, management essentially fired *all* the striking workers at once. This led to the layoff of about 550 workers in Doha's case, roughly 500 workers in Maghreb Steel's case, and about 130 workers in Med Paper's case. The striking workers were substituted with temporary workers, despite the fact that Article 496 of the Labour Code prohibits this practice when a strike is taking place. Fifty-one Doha workers were also sentenced to suspended prison sentences through Article 288 of the Penal Code. Moreover, the Regional SG of the Agadir CDT, Abdellah Rahmoun, was ordered to pay a fine of three million dirhams, risking the confiscation of his house (IUF 2016).[334]

The post-2011 backlash also had ramifications within the internal dynamics of the unions, particularly the UMT. In early 2012, the UMT Rabat was preparing its 12th Regional Congress, which the union Left was poised to win once more. The Congress was meant to take place in the autumn of 2011, but the UMT NEC had it postponed several times. In fact, as the social mobilisations began to wane, the UMT NEC had decided to recover control of the Rabat regional union from the Left.[335]

The *casus belli* was an article that appeared in the major daily newspaper *Al-Massae* (23 February 2012, Appendix, pp. 304-9) with the title: "The UMT: When Struggle and 'Mismanagement' Coexist".[336] The article recapitulated some of the main corruption and misappropriation cases in which UMT leaders were involved (see Chapter 3). It also explained how the UMT top leadership was breaching internal democracy, particularly by refusing to allow the UMT-FNE Congress and the UMT Rabat Congress to take place in a free and fair fashion. In the article, a leftist member of the Rabat UMT's Regional EC, Abdellah Lafnatsa, was interviewed to confirm the UMT NEC's attempts to halt the regional Congress.

The regional Congress had been rescheduled for 11 March 2012, but, on 5

[333] Interviews 19, 20, 33, 36, 40.
[334] In response to local and international pressures, Doha dropped its charges against Rahmoun in February 2017 (IUF 2017).
[335] Some activists assert that the UMT NEC was merely implementing a decision coming "from above", suggesting that the Palace or the Ministry of the Interior were not willing to tolerate anymore the use of the large UMT Rabat building as a "hot spot" for radical social movements, and thus ordered the union's top leadership to prevent this from happening in the future (Interviews 3, 10, 26, 29). It remains, however, impossible to verify these allegations.
[336] Translated from Arabic by Marwa Talhaoui and the author.

March 2012, the UMT Administrative Commission dissolved all the Rabat UMT's structures and expelled Abdellah Lafnatsa with the accusation of harming the UMT's public image through the *Al-Massae* article (see Amin *et al.* 2012a). A provisional Rabat EC was appointed to run the regional union and organise the Congress. On 9 March 2012, under the pretext of refurbishment works, the UMT leadership blocked access to the Rabat union building and changed the entrance locks. The regional Congress was eventually held on 13 May 2012, but the leftist trade unionists were barred from participating and held a separate Congress on 1 July 2012 (Amin *et al.* 2012b).

On 22 March 2012, a Discipline Commission expelled the three leftist NEC members – Abdelhamid Amin, Abderrazak Drissi, and Khadija Ghamiri – and one member of the Administrative Commission. They had all opposed the dissolution of the Rabat UMT's structures. The expelled leaders charged that there was no proof of the existence of the Discipline Commission that signed the expulsion order (its members being unknown) and that even if it existed it had not been formed according to the statutory regulations approved by the UMT 10th Congress (Amin *et al.* 2012c, Appendix, pp. 309-14).

In the following weeks, the UMT NEC attempted to dissolve the ECs of the national sectorial federations controlled by the Left. It thus constituted a "National Steering Committee of the Public Administration Sectors" to remove the UMT-USF's leftist leadership (UMT-USF 2012). In a similar way, the UMT NEC began to organise a sectorial union that would replace the UMT-FNOFCL (Amin *et al.* 2012c, Appendix, pp. 309-14). On 9 June 2012, after the UMT-FNOCFCL EC had been expelled from the UMT, there were two simultaneous Congresses of the federation, one held by the pro-UMT NEC trade unionists and one held by the expelled leftists (Amin *et al.* 2012b). The UMT NEC made a similar attempt with the UMT-FNSA, but it failed due to the lack of followers (*Ibidem*).

The case of the UMT-FNE was slightly different because, although the federation had a majority of leftist members and cadres, its NEC was still dominated by the "bureaucratic" leadership, since attempts to organise a new Congress had been halted for over seventeen years. On 5-6 May 2012, the two tendencies held separate Congresses. The leftist UMT-FNE elected the expelled leader Abderrazak Drissi as its SG, while the "official" UMT-FNE re-elected M'hamed Ghayour, the 1920-born leader that had been in charge since 1995 and was involved in a corruption case

regarding the MGEN (see Chapter 3).

This internal earthquake had multiple ramifications at the local level, as in many cases the local leaderships barred the UMT leftists from accessing the union offices.[337] As a leftist militant recalled: "We were not really expelled, they simply didn't let us in".[338] For example, on 27 May 2012, a "militia" led by the UMT NEC violently took over the Taza UMT building, hitherto controlled by the UMT Left (Amin *et al.* 2012d). On 26 July 2012, a sit-in against the expulsions in front of the Rabat UMT building turned into physical clashes between the leftists and the UMT NEC's followers (*Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 1 August 2012). The turmoil led to *de facto* splits in the UMT-FNOFCL and in the UMT-FNE, and thus to divisions in the UMT-USF umbrella federation too. The Ministry of the Interior granted official recognition to the pro-UMT NEC sectorial ECs. Only the UMT-FNSA managed to safeguard its unity. The three leftist federations, and the UMT-USF umbrella federation, thus regrouped under the label UMT-*Courante Démocratique* (UMT-CD), which waged a campaign to denounce the UMT NEC's actions as undemocratic and unlawful.

However, the UMT-CD soon became divided over which path to follow. Even if many in the UMT-CD were not party members, most militants linked to *Ennahj* – consistent with their principle of "workers' unity" – wanted to keep struggling for the democratisation and radicalisation of the UMT.[339] Yet several trade unionists belonging to other leftist tendencies – *Al-Mounadil-a* in particular – thought that this was the occasion to found a new and militant confederation.[340] The position on this issue was not only dictated by partisan alignments but also by sectorial belongings. In fact, the strategy of leaving the UMT was more popular in the UMT-FNE, while that of remaining was dominant in the UMT-FNSA.[341] Eventually, the UMT-FNSA and the UMT-FNOFCL fully re-entered the UMT before the 2015 professional elections, while the UMT-FNE decided to remain outside. On 21 March 2015, the UMT 11th Congress re-elected Moukharik as national SG, and no member of the union Left was elected to a post in the NEC (see *La vie éco*, 27 March 2015).

It took years for a new compromise to be found between the UMT Left and its leadership, but the overall result was a renewed weakening of internal democracy and

[337] Interviews 3, 24, 31, 42.
[338] Interview 26.
[339] Interviews 7, 29, 42.
[340] Interviews 19, 22, 37.
[341] Interviews 26, 29, 30.

the consecration of the non-application of the internal reforms that had been formally approved by the UMT 10th Congress. The UMT Left explicitly pointed out that the internal crackdown against it was related to the tensions, shifts in power relations, and backlashes set in motion by the broader political events:

> The political struggles within the confederation [the UMT] were at first centred on the position towards the M20Fev: should the union provide the M20Fev with material and human, real and sincere, political support or should it restrain itself to theoretical support through public statements, without practical, material, and human support? It was the second option that prevailed.
> The political struggle intensified when it became necessary to take sides *vis-à-vis* the constitutional draft presented at the 1 July 2011 referendum. While the dominant current within the leadership defended the draft, and pushed to call for a Yes vote, the democratic current defended the position that the NEC should leave freedom of choice to the members…[342] (Amin *et al.* 2012c, Appendix, p. 312)

An interviewed leftist militant added:

> The regime had started to see the importance of the Left within the labour movement, the unions… especially for what concerns the important role played by the UGTT in Tunisia. This pressured the Moroccan state to take strong and clear-cut decisions regarding the union Left. (Interview 10)

The union leaderships that had endorsed a Yes vote in the referendum were conscious of the fact that this meant postponing significant reforms for social justice and democracy, but they esteemed there was no alternative. Once the mobilisations ebbed, the UMT leadership felt confident enough to attempt to simply get rid of its internal opposition. While this bid did not succeed as expected, internal democracy in Morocco's largest trade union clearly deteriorated once again, which reflected the trajectory of the whole country.

[342] Translated from French by the author.

Conclusion

Contrary to Tunisia, in Morocco the various strands of social unrest did not overcome sectorial fragmentation. As shown in Chapter 5, two factors that arguably contributed to this difference are the lower level of working-class power as well as the absence of a former populist social pact, which lowered the expectations of many Moroccan workers, despite the fact that they were on aggregate more deprived than the Tunisian ones.

Therefore, in Morocco, social mobilisations were not strong enough to pressure the trade union leaderships to take radical actions in support of the movements for social justice and democracy. Moreover, the unions themselves were too divided, undemocratic, and weak to take decisive action. At the same time, they were inserted in a flexible institutional context – featuring party mediation, union fragmentation, and social dialogue – that harnessed them to defuse social tension. Labour weakness and flexible institutions contribute to account for the unions' limited and accommodating role during the 2011 uprising, even if – as seen above – most unions initially endorsed the M20Fev and the union Left attempted to maintain and extend this support.

This interpretation differs from that proposed by Matt Buehler, who writes:

> Did the situation of unionists parallel that of feminist and Amazigh activists in which broader objectives of democratisation were surrendered for narrow factional interests?
>
> The answer to this question is no. In contrast to Tunisia and Egypt where protestors, *a priori*, demanded regime change, this did not occur in Morocco where they emphasised regime reform. (Buehler 2015, p. 103)

While in Morocco protests were overall less radical than in Tunisia, Buehler's view ignores that the strategic objectives of several M20Fev components did in fact include "regime change", although this question was left open by the compromise of demanding a "democratic constitution" (which obviously means protesters had "broader objectives of democratisation"). More clearly, the M20Fev called for a boycott of the constitutional referendum, while all trade unions except for the CDT promoted a Yes vote. In the cases of the UMT and FDT, support for the constitutional reform came despite the fact that the two confederations had initially endorsed the

M20Fev.

After the mobilisations ebbed, the regime was able to withdraw many of the concessions it had made in 2011 without facing efficacious resistance from the unions. Yet some interviewees pointed out that the movements of 2011 had the effect of spreading and normalising social protest to a higher extent than before.[343] This, together with deterioration of the socioeconomic and political situation, probably contributes to explain the recent and dramatic rise of *El-Hirak Esh'aby* (Popular Movement) in the Rif and of the *Hirak* (Movement) of Jerada. However, these new mobilisations for social justice fall outside the scope of this thesis.

[343] Interviews 5, 15, 34.

Chapter 7 – Tunisia: Trade Union Polarisation and Insurrection

Introduction

This chapter traces the steps that led from the social struggles of the 2000s to the 2011 uprising, focusing on the relations between the mobilisations of the precarious and the UGTT, as well as on the internal conflicts within the confederation. After the 2002 UGTT 20th Congress, increasing signs of tension in the country and within the UGTT started to emerge. Such tensions reached a first peak in 2008, corresponding with a wave of riots – facilitated by the rise in food prices accompanying the global economic crisis – that affected several African countries (Berazneva and Lee 2013). In Tunisia, the revolt of precarious youths in the mining basin of Gafsa had reverberations within the UGTT, as "militants" and "bureaucrats" took opposite sides in the conflict.

The 2011 uprising was, in some respects, a repeat of the Gafsa revolt, in that the protagonists of the mobilisations were once again precarious youths, and once again their protests created a rift in the UGTT between those ready to go to great lengths to support them and those who prioritised the safeguarding of the NEC's policy of compromise with the regime. However, in December 2010 and January 2011, the mobilisations spread across the country and the politicised rank-and-file were able to push the higher levels of the UGTT to authorise the regional general strikes that were crucial in bringing Ben Ali down. The union militants were thus able to create a juncture between the precarious workers mobilising in the communities and the more secure workers who brought the struggle into the workplaces through the general strikes and the subsequent strike wave.

Relatively high working-class structural power and the breech of the former populist social pact contributed to the radicalism and the relative unification of the protests in a widespread and sustained wave of anti-regime mobilisations. Radical protests meant intense pressure on the UGTT to mobilise their members, and the UGTT's high associational power made the option of politicised general strikes more likely to be sustainable. The rigidity of Tunisia's system of labour institutions – characterised by a single trade union and the absence of party mediation between the

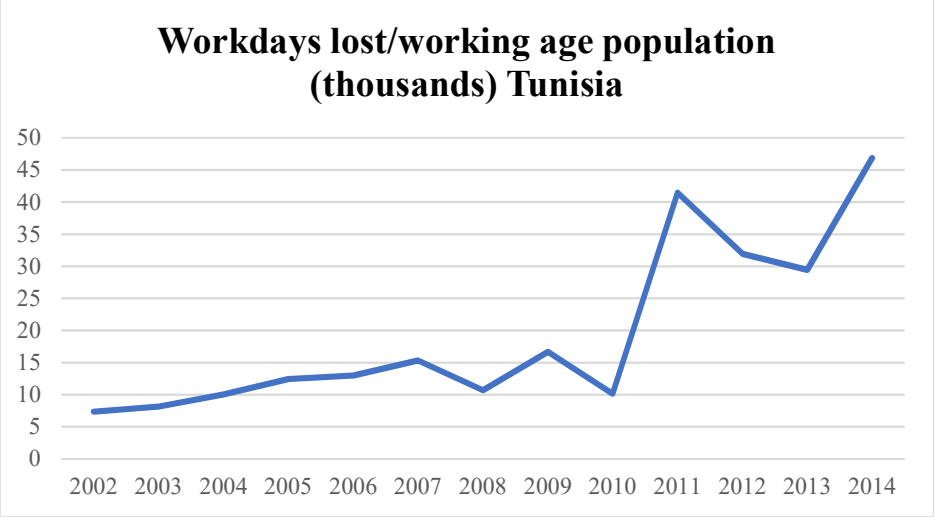
unions and the state – made it harder to channel social conflict into institutionalised outlets.

In the aftermath of the uprising, the UGTT found a new role as broker of the political negotiations between the Islamist government and the opposition, contributing to the stabilisation of the democratic transition. This role gave it a central position in the emerging political order – including an influential say over the composition of governments – which was formalised through the Pact of Carthage (see below). These processes are leading to a new institutional configuration that is still in the making but that seems to display the characteristics of democratic corporatism. However, in the context of authoritarian restoration or civil war in the other countries affected by the 2011 uprisings, the Tunisian uprising was able to achieve representative democracy but unable to satisfy the demands for social justice that were at its core. This put the UGTT in a difficult position *vis-à-vis* the precarious fractions of the working class, who have continued mobilising to this day.

7.1 Social Struggles and the Battle for Internal Democracy in the UGTT

This section shows how the class struggles taking place outside of the UGTT – mainly waged by non-unionised precarious workers in their communities – interacted with the struggles for internal democracy inside the UGTT. The combination of social tensions and Tunisia's rigid system of labour institutions contributed to sharpen the internal polarisation between union "militants" and "bureaucrats".

Graph 11 – Strike activity in Tunisia, 2002-2014



Calculated by the author based on ILO and Ministry of Social affairs data.

In the early 2000s, street demonstrations on international issues became prominent, first in support of the Second Intifada and then against the invasion of Iraq. Such demonstrations were tolerated by the regime so as not to further compromise its weak nationalist credentials, but they were also an occasion for the opposition to stealthily voice their dissent. In the meantime, the UGTT refused to participate in the newly created Chamber of Advisors in parliament, reclaiming the right to autonomously select its representatives. Parallel to this, a new surge of strike activity gained momentum starting in 2003 and reaching a first peak in 2007 (see Graph 11, p. 221).

These mounting social and political conflicts emboldened the UGTT dissidents to demand further internal democratisation, while SG Jerad and his associates attempted to maintain the compromise between the labour confederation and the regime. These tensions came to the fore at the UGTT 21st Congress, held on 14-16 December 2006 in Monastir.[344] Ali Romdhane was by now an ally of Jerad's and the Congress made him the new Secretary of Internal Regulation. The main opposition list was led by the left-leaning Tunis Regional SG Taoufik Touati.[345] Pressure on the Congress by the Ministry of the Interior was extraordinary. Over a hundred union militants had organised to be present outside of the Congress hall, but the police made sure that they could not find accommodation in the hotels of Monastir. When the militants' march approached the hotel where the Congress was being held, the police attacked them. In the meantime, inside the hotel, a major controversy revolved around Article 10 of the internal regulation, which mandated a two-term limit on NEC membership. When a number of Congress delegates took a break to check on the situation of the militants outside, Jerad passed the abolition of Article 10. According to the interviewees, the delegates came back into the hall and discovered that the motion had been approved without them knowing:

> All of a sudden the scene became chaotic. Those who had stayed in the hall shouted all over the place, we came back and blocked everything for two or three hours. Some delegates mounted the stage, took the

[344] Monastir was not neutral territory; it was Bourguiba's hometown and an RCD stronghold where the UGTT Regional SG (Said Youssef) was also an RCDist.
[345] While most dissidents were leftists, candidates close to the Patriotic Democratic Labour Party (*Awad*, one of the descendants of *Esh'ola*) and *Watad*'s Abid Briki had reached a compromise with Jerad and entered the NEC.

> microphone and said it was like a coup. So they [the exiting NEC] finally agreed to vote again and the large majority chose to keep Article 10. (Interview 77)

> My mates and I, we entered the place and turned the Congress upside down. […] We stopped the reform of Article 10 but Jerad took me aside and told me: "Wait and see what will happen!". (Interview 91)

The following period is known as the "witch-hunt". Jerad and Romdhane began to roll back secondments and freeze the union membership of several dissidents to prepare for the abolition of Article 10 at the 22nd Congress (RSDM 2010b, Appendix, pp. 314-8). Notable victims included the Bizerte Regional SG Abderrazak Bejaoui and the Nabeul Regional SG Habib Ghannem (*Le temps*, 6 January 2009).[346]

In 2008, the NEC turned on the Tunis Regional SG Taoufik Touati, accusing him of financial mismanagement. Touati and his allies in the Regional EC called for a regional union meeting for 25 December 2008 to explain their view that the charges were trumped up.[347] Yet on that day, the police encircled the UGTT HQ to prevent the meeting from being held. According to the dissidents, this was additional proof of direct coordination between Jerad and the Ministry of the Interior. Touati and his associates resorted to speaking from the rooftop of the regional UGTT building. In an extremely tense atmosphere, they denounced Jerad's corruption and mismanagement. The following day, the dissidents found that the locks of their offices had been changed. On 10 February 2009, after a protracted struggle, the Internal Regulation Commission froze Touati's membership for seven years and that of Regional EC members Radhi Ben Hassine and Raoudha Hamrouni for two years (*Le temps*, 12 February 2009).

In the midst of such internal conflicts, the Gafsa revolt broke out on 5 January 2008 (see Allal 2010; Chouikha and Gobe 2009). The event started as an informal mobilisation of the precarious youth, protesting against the results of a competition for employment in the public mining company *Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa* (CPG). The main demands concerned secure employment and local development. The

[346] Reportedly, some NEC members internally opposed this policy, to no avail (see Ouertatani 2007).
[347] Interviews 77, 91.

protesters charged that the results were rigged by nepotism and political clientelism in which UGTT officials were themselves implicated. The long-time Gafsa Regional SG Amara Abbassi – from the *Fédération Générale des Travailleurs des Mines* (UGTT-FGTM) – was also an MP with the RCD and the owner of companies that provided outsourced labour to the CPG. While Gafsa city remained calm, the mobilisations occurred in the nearby mining villages of Redeyef, Moulares, Mdhila, and to a lesser extent Metlaoui.

> Metlaoui is Amara Abbassi's hometown. He was Regional SG and MP at the same time so more people there sided with him, his tribal network. We tried a lot but the mining unions were with him and they are many more than us. […] There was a minority against him, all from public administration. (Interview 73)

It was in Redeyef that politicised UGTT rank-and-file led by Adnen Hajji, Bechir Laabidi, and Taieb Ben Othman – all members of the *Syndicat Général de l'Enseignement de Base* (UGTT-SGEB) – set up a negotiating committee to support the precarious youth's demands. They were thus able, together with militant unemployed graduates from the UDC, to turn the informal insurrection into a protracted social movement. For five months, the mobilisations resisted heavy repression – with three deaths and hundreds of arrests, including cases of torture in police custody – and only stopped on 7 June 2008, when the army stepped in.

There emerged a direct conflict between the politicised UGTT militants and the Gafsa Regional EC (see also Chouikha and Geisser 2010). The union militants did not shy away from denouncing Amara Abbassi and his associates' corruption and tribalised patron-client networks. In return, on 19 February 2008, the Regional EC froze Hajji's membership and the measure was later confirmed by the national Internal Regulation Commission. Also, that year, a group of local rank-and-file militants publicly protested against Abdessalem Jerad during his visit to Gafsa city, and were consequently referred to the Internal Regulation Commission.

In June 2008, Hajji and the other movement leaders were imprisoned during a wave of arrests that lasted into July. The UGTT NEC had supported Amara Abbassi, but after the arrests, NEC member Houcine Abbassi mediated with the regime, asking for the liberation of the prisoners. The latter were supported by the *Comité de soutien*

aux habitants du bassin minier de Gafsa, whose spokesperson, Abderrahman Hedhili, was an UGTT-SGES militant. Thirty-eight movement leaders were finally tried in court and thirty-three were convicted. The prison sentences ranged from two to eight years. Hajji's UGTT membership had only been restored on 3 December 2008, the day before the beginning of the trial.

The deep-seated imbalances between the coastal and the interior regions reinforced the continuing political significance of the historical intersections between class and locality. Workers in the interior regions tend to share a strong resentment against multi-faceted discrimination on the part of the country's economic and political elites, who originate disproportionately from the Sahel and Tunis (see Ayeb 2011; Hibou 2015b). In Gafsa, these feelings were accentuated by the fact that the mining region used to be relatively privileged under the protectorate and that its inhabitants deemed that too little profits from phosphate extraction were reinvested for local development (see Allal and Bennafla 2011).

This convergence of class and local identities, however, intertwined with the longstanding influence of "tribalism", particularly strong in the mining unions (see Pontiggia 2017). Family belonging is a crucial criterion of representation there, resulting in what are sometimes referred to as "tribal quotas". The leftist groups have historically attempted to oppose "tribalism", but in practice it is difficult for progressive trade unionists to escape these dynamics:

> We've tried to fight this scourge, especially in the 1980s, but unfortunately we also caught the disease. […] We try to place in each union some militants with a different mentality, but then they are forced to work in that way too. (Interview 72)

The revolt was marked by a crucial difference in class composition compared with the cycle of struggle of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In both cases, the mobilisations were supported by leftist militants organised within the public administration unions. However, while the protagonists of the earlier round of mobilisations were manual workers in large manufacturing complexes, this time the precarious working-class fractions deprived of secure employment came to the forefront. The latter included a wide array of profiles, such as informal sector workers, unemployed graduates, or employees of the companies providing outsourced labour

to the CPG.

The Gafsa miners had gained a reputation for their large strikes until the transition to neoliberalism. Yet, with the CPG's technological and organisational restructuring, the number of its employees shrunk from 13,464 in 1985 to 6,200 in 2006 (Dhaoui 2008, p. 76). Consent for the restructuring was bought with higher wages for the remaining secure workers and various advantages for the trade unionists, including decision-making power over recruitment in the CPG. Entering the CPG was widely seen as *the* way to attain a secure income and thus to ensure existential stability, as shown by the fact that employment in the mining company was a main demand of the protesters in 2008. Most workers who had managed to enter the CPG were unlikely to be willing to jeopardise their position by taking action in solidarity with the precarious fractions. They did not mobilise in the workplace during the events of 2008 and their union representatives mostly took a hostile attitude towards the protests. In the Redeyef UGTT Local EC, no UGTT-FGTM official supported the mobilisations.[348] Hajji and his associates in the Local EC were all members of public administration unions: primary teaching, secondary teaching, and health. A primary teaching trade unionist was concisely straightforward on the issue:

LF: What about the mining unions?
UGTT: They are the main enemy. (Interview 72)

The divergences within the UGTT can be understood through the lenses of the internal polarisation between the politicised sections of the rank-and-file, on the one hand, and the compromising top leadership and its followers, on the other. Such polarisation was sharpened by the rigid neoliberal version of authoritarian corporatism analysed in Chapter 4, which handed out organisational inducements to union officials, while retrenching substantial inducements to the workers and repressing dissent. In the leftist activists' jargon, this polarisation was conceptualised as an opposition between "militants" and "bureaucrats".[349]

As seen in Chapter 2, a classic Marxist view is that the union bureaucracy is

[348] Interviews 69, 70, 73.
[349] This terminology is not employed in this research because the phrase "union bureaucracy" tends to obscure the diffusion of the patrimonial (and thus non-bureaucratic) practices that were used by the union leadership to limit internal democracy (see Chapter 2).

the layer of full-time trade union officials mediating between workers, employers, and the state, irrespective of their subjective political leanings.[350] However, many UGTT militants seem more inclined to think of the "bureaucrats" as those unionists willing to limit internal democracy to uphold the alliance with the regime and the class compromise with capital.[351] According to this view, even if the "bureaucracy" held sway at the top, while the "militants" had most of their influence at the base, one may well find full-time "militant" unionists as well as "bureaucratic" workplace union representatives:

> The bureaucracy is a mentality, it's a conception of trade unionism. It means tackling the trade union problems not by using transparent, free, and democratic procedures with the base but through compromise with the state and with the bosses. (Interview 77)

While the relations between "militants" and "bureaucrats" grew at times extremely acrimonious, most of the former maintained that it was necessary to exercise their pressure on the UGTT leadership from within, because of the confederation's social weight as the largest mass organisation in the country and its historical legitimacy. In the early 2000s, the leftist Mohamed Taher Chaieb attempted to establish an alternative labour confederation but the project did not gather enough support.[352]

The Gafsa events and the "witch-hunt" within the UGTT prompted the dissident trade unionists to step up their efforts for internal democracy. This resulted in the establishment of an internal UGTT current called the *Rencontre Syndicale Démocratique Militante* (RSDM), which aimed at coordinating all the (broadly speaking) progressive oppositions, mainly Marxists and ex-Marxists, Arab nationalists, and independents.[353] Two RSDM members explained:

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[350] In 2015, the UGTT had 420 full-time employees (European Commission 2015, p. 54). To this one should add an estimated one hundred detached trade unionists (Interview 46), placing the total number of UGTT full-timers somewhere between 500 and 600. This is a very small number compared to Western trade unions, to which the state delegates a number of administrative and welfare functions.
[351] Interviews 48, 49, 50, 52, 54, 65, 74, 77, 81.
[352] In any case, it is highly unlikely that the state would have recognised the new union.
[353] Prominent RSDM leaders were Othman Belhaj Amor (*Harakat El-Ba'ath Ettounsi*), Radhi Ben Hassine (independent), Taieb Bouaicha (*Watad*), Fraj Chabbeh (*Watad*), Jilani Hammami (PCOT), Houcine Rhili (independent), and Taoufik Touati (independent).

> [The RSDM] was a leftist group that wanted to establish internal democracy in the UGTT. As we always say that the UGTT is the engine of the country, we wanted to limit the mandates of the UGTT's leader to do the same with the country as a whole.[354] (Interview 91)

> For the first time, the internal opposition jointly organised and acted as such. Because the opposition had always been there, but each group tended to act alone. In this case, we organised around a common platform, with shared goals and tactics. (Interview 77)

During 2009, the promoters of the initiative worked on building a network of contacts on a regional basis. On 7 September 2010, the RSDM officially launched its platform, accompanied by the signatures of 801 trade unionists (RSDM 2010b, Appendix, pp. 314-8).[355] By 6 October 2010, the number of adherents had reached 1,311. The RSDM's rallying cry was the call for a "democratic, independent, and militant UGTT". The platform did not hesitate to denounce "the complicity of the trade union confederation controlled by the bureaucracy and the regime", adding that "the UGTT is ignoring the material and social losses incurred by the workers, as well as the threats caused by the new reform projects" and that the "relations between the UGTT, on the one hand, and civil society groups and the democratic public opinion, on the other, have deteriorated" (*Ibidem*).

Jerad and the RSDM were thus squaring off in view of the UGTT 22nd Congress, in which Jerad wanted to amend Article 10 and thus remove the two-term limit. Jerad planned to anticipate the Congress – as he had done with the former – in order to leave little time for the opposition to organise (*Réalités*, 9 September 2010). Yet he was hindered by internal resistance and external social instability, for example the August 2010 Ben Guerdane riots.[356] However, unexpected developments would soon subvert the calculations of all contending parties:

> The first phase [of the RSDM] was a period of preparation. The second

[354] According to the Tunisian Constitution of the time, presidential candidates could not be older than 75. As Ben Ali had turned 74 in 2010, he was trying to amend it to be able to run for a new mandate.
[355] The very first version had 786 signatures, but it was then corrected.
[356] Interview 75.

> phase, when we started to see how to mobilise… Well, there came the uprising. (Interview 87)

During the 2011 uprising, these UGTT internal opponents would become important actors in mobilising the confederation's associational power in solidarity with the struggles taking place outside of the workplaces and of the union framework.

7.2 The 2011 Uprising Outside and Inside the UGTT

This section documents and analyses the 2011 Tunisian uprising through the lenses of workers' struggles in their interaction with the UGTT. As specified in Chapter 2, unwaged workers and the so-called unemployed are considered here as part of the working-class composition – in line with the conception of class deployed in this thesis – because they are excluded from significant ownership and control of capital.

As it is well known, the Tunisian uprising started on 17 December 2010 in the marginalised interior region of Sidi Bouzid, with the self-immolation of street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi and the ensuing clashes between mostly precarious youths and the police. Shortly after Bouazizi's act, relatives and friends assembled in front of the governorate and the gathering gradually grew. The day after, the crowd gathered again and were confronted by riot police, with clashes quickly ensuing. The mobilisation picked up momentum and it persisted for weeks, mostly through peaceful demonstrations during the day and clashes between youths and police during the night. As typical in Tunisia, many of the marches started from the UGTT premises.[357]

It was the RSDM spokesperson in Sidi Bouzid, Atia Athmouni, along with three other unionists from the *Syndicat Général de l'Enseignement Secondaire* (UGTT-SGES), who first visited Mohamed Bouazizi in the local hospital to demand that he be transferred to the better-equipped Sfax hospital.[358] The unionists and other activists intervened to underline the social and political causes of Bouazizi's deed and then coordinated with the protesters and with local lawyers to launch a committee in support of the mobilisations. An important role was played by Ali Zouari, Regional SG of the UGTT-SGES. A second, more uncompromising, committee was formed on 19 December 2010, by other activists and trade unionists including UGTT-SGES

[357] As Mizouni (2012), among others, points out, this distinguishes Tunisia from other Arab countries concerned by the 2011 uprisings, where many demonstrations started from the mosques.
[358] Interview 85, 89.

militant Slimane Rouissi.

On 18 December 2010, a group of politicised UGTT militants coming from the whole region decided to spread the mobilisations to the areas outside of Sidi Bouzid city to break the police "siege".[359] The villages that saw the largest solidarity demonstrations were Menzel Bouzayane and Regueb. The UGTT had a local union in both villages, and militant unionists like Abdessalem Hidouri, Youssef Salhi and Nasser Zribi coordinated with the precarious youth and particularly with the unemployed graduates to organise local actions (see also Hmed 2012; Salmon 2016).

Like in Gafsa, the UGTT Sidi Bouzid Regional SG, Touhami Heni, was also an MP for the ruling party. However, he did not disavow the protest, although – initially – he was wary of officially mobilising the regional UGTT in support.[360] The UGTT NEC did not declare any solidarity action, but it fulfilled its traditional role of lobbying for the liberation of the prisoners. The militant unionists, however, mobilised autonomously despite (and against) the lack of calls for action from the intermediate and higher structures of the organisation. The UGTT's deepening internal polarisation had also affected the local level:

> The [regional] union was split into two poles. One pole was that of secondary teaching, around which a number of militant unionists gravitated. The other pole was that of the bureaucracy, revolving around the Regional SG. So the struggle between the two became fiercer and fiercer. (Interview 85)

Meanwhile, the RSDM organised a solidarity demonstration to be held on 25 December 2010 in front of the UGTT HQ in Tunis. In parallel, a group of hackers linked to the Takriz collective shared on social media a forged UGTT NEC statement calling for a demonstration in front of the UGTT HQ on the same day (see also Salmon 2016, pp. 147-50). The result was the first relatively large protest in the capital. Momentum was also generated by the fact that, the day before, the police had killed

[359] Interview 75.

[360] The interviewees offered two kinds of explanations of Heni's conduct. According to one view, Heni did not disavow the movement because he wanted to safeguard his credibility in the face of the mobilised base (Interviews 74, 82, 85). According to a second view, it was a feeling of local loyalty that pushed the Regional SG to side with the population, as the governor Faouzi Ben Arab was from the Sahel (Interviews 48, 82). The two explanations are not incompatible as the two factors were mutually reinforcing.

protesters Mohamed Amari and Chawki Nassri in Menzel Bouzayane – they were the first to fall in the uprising. The slogans of the demonstration directly targeted the regime, for example: "Down with the RCD, down with the assassins of the people".[361] The gathering was surrounded and attacked by the police. Five UGTT national sectorial federations then called for a new demonstration for 27 December 2010.[362] In this case too, the demonstration was attacked by the police and the slogans were directly political, one of the reasons why Jerad disavowed it in the media: "The slogans that were chanted do not represent the UGTT at all […] and what happened yesterday was not organised by the union confederation" (*Essabah*, 28 December 2010).[363]

In early January, as the school winter break finished, the protests spread to several areas of the country. Heavy clashes broke out in the village of Thala (in the marginalised region of Kasserine) and in Kasserine city. The movement repeated the format of peaceful demonstrations during the day and nocturnal clashes. On 9 January 2011, the police gunned down at least five protesters in Regueb,[364] after which the UGTT's Local EC declared an open-ended local general strike. Between 8 and 10 January 2011, the police fired live bullets at protesters in Thala and Kasserine city, killing at least 18.[365] The Kasserine Regional EC, led by the RCDist Amor Mhamdi, maintained an ambiguous stance until the massacre, after which it sided with the protesters, eventually declaring a general strike.

In Gafsa, the mining basin villages were still reeling from repression, but a mobilisation of the precarious youth supported by local militant unionists gathered momentum in the village of El Guettar. Clashes broke out in El Guettar and Gafsa city on 10-11 January 2011 and continued during the following days. Amara Abbassi stood by the regime until the very end and there was no general strike in the region. Yet, reportedly, this did not spare the UGTT Gafsa building from being shot at by the police on 14 January 2011.[366]

The killings of protesters on 8-10 January 2011 created widespread public outrage and increased the explicit politicisation of the protests. Furthermore, the

[361] Interview 65.
[362] They were the UGTT-SGEB, UGTT-SGES, *Fédération Générale des Postes et Télécommunications*, *Syndicat Général des Médecins des Pharmaciens des Chirurgiens-Dentistes de la Santé Publique*, and *Syndicat Général de la Sécurité Sociale des Caisses* (*Achourouk*, 28 December 2010).
[363] Translated from Arabic by Inel Tarfa and the author.
[364] See http://www.14janvier2011.com/victimes.html (retrieved 30 September 2016).
[365] *Ibidem*.
[366] Interview 67.

killings provided an opportunity for the UGTT militants to step up their pressure on the union's intermediate and higher structures (see also Ayari *et al.* 2011). On 11 January 2011, while heavy clashes had reached the popular neighbourhoods of the capital, the UGTT National Administrative Commission authorised regional initiatives to support the protesters' demands, opening the way to regional general strikes. This was the second "bloody divorce" between the union and the state.

On 12 January 2011, the general strike in the industrialised region of Sfax took place, along with the regional strikes of Kairouan and Tozeur. The Sfax Regional EC, led by SG Mohamed Sha'aban, had actually taken the decision to strike on 9 January 2011 and thus before the National Administrative Commission gave it its "blessing".[367] The Sfax demonstration gathered tens of thousands of protesters and it was followed by clashes with the police. The 19-year-old Amor Haddad was shot and killed. The Sfax general strike is seen as the turning point of the uprising; it was in fact the first mass mobilisation outside of the marginalised regions. It also signalled that the UGTT's national structures had been successfully pressured into siding with the uprising. As an interviewee said: "The Sfax strike liberated the UGTT".[368]

It can hardly be said, however, that the Sfax strike "liberated" the UGTT SG. In the afternoon of the same day, Jerad met Ben Ali at the presidential palace. The true content of their discussion is unknown and the speculations of the trade unionists vary wildly. In any case, in the aftermath of the meeting, Jerad declared to the press:

> I have had the honour of meeting the Head of State and it was the occasion of a very important discussion, in which we tackled the painful situation of some regions of the country and some ideas and proposals by the UGTT. I have found that the President of the Republic has a deep vision of the main problems and of their causes, and he is willing to solve them. […] The UGTT is sorry for the victims but in the same way it rejects all forms of violence and all attacks on the public and private assets and on the achievements of the country. […] I have found that the Head of State has a high consideration of the workers and of their organisation… (*La presse de Tunisie*, 14 January 2011, Appendix, pp. 318-9)

[367] Interview 83.
[368] Interview 86.

However, the mobilisations continued to follow their own momentum. On 13 January 2011, regional general strikes were held in Sidi Bouzid and Jendouba. On 14 January 2011, the general strike of Greater Tunis[369] took place. It was meant to be a mere two-hour stoppage but it became a large demonstration that filled the city centre, from the UGTT HQ to the vicinity of the Ministry of the Interior, where it devolved into a series of clashes. In the late afternoon of the same day, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia to widespread disbelief.

The UGTT as an organisation had a complex role in the uprising. The politicised rank-and-file militants played a crucial part since the beginning, the intermediate and finally the peak structures gradually responded to pressure from below, and the national SG remained open to a compromise with Ben Ali until the end. The fracture within the UGTT should not be understood merely as a cleavage between base and top, since ideological inclinations and belonging to militant sectors also mattered. Only some sections of the base – the politicised ones – took early action in support of the revolting working-class precarious fractions, and they were backed in this by those left-wing cadres who had gained access to posts in the intermediate structures. A notable example is Sami Tahri, who at the time was the UGTT-SGES SG. However, the influence of the politicised militants was inversely proportional to the organisational level of the union, strongest among the base and weakest in the NEC. This is not surprising, as pressures by the state and capital increase as one moves up the organisational ladder. Furthermore, there was no organised counter-revolutionary mobilisation among the UGTT's rank-and-file – those who did not actively support the uprising simply remained passive.

The politicised UGTT militants' role was geographically uneven and this depended mainly on the local strength of the union Left. For example, in Metlaoui, Amara Abbassi's fiefdom, the protesters reportedly set the local UGTT building on fire,[370] a treatment that was usually reserved for police stations and RCD buildings. Yet the overall contribution of the UGTT militants has been underlined by all interviewees and it seems to be acknowledged even by the UGTT's adversaries. For instance, an article published on a pro-Islamist online platform that takes sides against

[369] Greater Tunis comprises the four regions of Tunis, Manouba, Ariana, and Ben Arous.
[370] Interview 73.

the UGTT and the "Marxist leftists hiding behind the UGTT" reads as follows:

> During the revolution, the relationship between the leadership of the UGTT and the regime was not affected. Nevertheless, a number of union members in several governorates helped to organise anti-government protests in December 2010. Those protests, along with the solidarity actions in cities such as Sidi Bouzid and Gasserine, were what really triggered the revolution. (*Middle East Monitor*, 24 December 2012)

As Hèla Yousfi pointed out, the UGTT militants contributed to the uprising by politicising the "spontaneous" movement, coordinating with the other organised actors, and mediating with the trade union and political authorities (Yousfi 2015, p. 65). The linkages between socioeconomic and political demands had existed since the beginning. Baccar Gherib writes the following about the famous slogan "*Ettashghil istehqaq, ya issabat essoraq!*" ("Employment is a right, you gang of thieves!"):

> In this short sentence we actually find, in addition to the demand for the right to employment, the damning of the corruption at the top of the state. There is also the connection between the misery and the hopelessness of some and the abuses and crimes of others.[371] (Gherib 2012, p. 24)

The protests became even more explicitly aimed at the regime in the later stages of the uprising, as the growing mass movement clashed with escalating repression, e.g. "*Ben Ali sabrek sabrek, Kasserine tahfer qabrek*" ("Ben Ali wait wait, Kasserine is digging your grave"). It thus seems that the slogans promoted by the politicised militants had found fertile ground among the mobilised population since the beginning.

In many cases, it was the militant unionists that appeared in foreign media to explain the protesters' demands, particularly on Al Jazeera. Furthermore, the demonstrations often started from the UGTT buildings, which were also used to hold citizens' assemblies to coordinate the movement. An indispensable task of the union militants was that of using the UGTT's network to spread the movement

[371] Translated from French by the author.

geographically, in order to ease police pressure on Sidi Bouzid (see also Hmed 2012):

> There were many communications among the regions that wouldn't have been possible outside of the UGTT. I mean that the ordinary citizens who took to the streets in Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, Sfax were not in touch with each other. But the UGTT is an organisation that already has its own architecture, it's thus the union militants who made the connections so that the other regions join the movement and that the same slogans are used. […] They lived 2008 as a defeat and they learnt their lessons to make sure that it'd work out well at the next occasion. (Interview 61)

Here is an example, from Gafsa, of how this mechanism functioned:

> I had been in touch with the comrades from Tunis, Sfax, Kasserine. Yeah, on the telephone. "What's happening, what do you think, how is it evolving?" One day, in January, a comrade from Kasserine calls me and says: "Hey, the police are attacking us at the UGTT building". […] After two days he got mad at me and said: "If you don't do something in Gafsa, never call me again". So on 11 January we decided to move from the UGTT premises, which were already encircled by the police. We were just about twenty people. The police marched next to us […]. On the way back, we came across the kids coming out of school, and the whole thing kicked off and continued for days. (Interview 72)

The Tunisian uprising thus confronts us with the paradox of the importance of trade unionism in concomitance with the relatively marginal role of the industrial workers, who are traditionally associated with labour militancy. The real protagonist of the uprising was the precarious youth, with the politicised public administration unionists (and other activists) providing support and some guidance.

In 2010, in the whole Sidi Bouzid region, there were only 28 private sector industrial enterprises with 10 employees or more – most of them in food processing and textiles – employing a total of 2,750 workers (API 2015a; 2015b) out of a

population of 411,880 (INS 2011).[372] The sectors in which the regional UGTT had most members were, in order, primary teaching, secondary teaching, agriculture, and health.[373] Most members of the UGTT's *Fédération Générale de l'Agriculture* were civil servants at the Ministry of Agriculture rather than agricultural labourers. Indeed, it is public administration that gave the UGTT a comprehensive and capillary national infrastructure, even in the marginalised regions that had gone through very little industrialisation. Thus, the militant trade unionists who mobilised to defend and expand the uprising were public administration intellectual workers, especially in secondary and primary teaching.

As seen above, with the decline of agricultural employment, the stagnation of industrial employment, and the effects of austerity on hiring in public administration, the burden of absorbing the workforce expelled by automation from agriculture fell mostly on the low-end tertiary private sector. The events in Sidi Bouzid demonstrate this clearly. During the 1990s, land ownership, which up to that point was mostly transmitted via inheritance, became increasingly commodified (see Gana 2012). This allowed investors from the coastal regions, often connected to the regime through patron-client relationships, to grab profitable plots of land in the interior of the country and restructure production on them. Mohamed Bouazizi himself, in fact, used to be an agricultural labourer working on a plot of land owned by his uncle, but the latter was over-indebted to the *Banque Nationale Agricole*, which in turn forced him to sell the land to a Sfaxian businessman (Fautras 2015). In June 2010, Bouazizi's uncle and other tomato farmers staged protests and land occupations in Regueb, claiming a right to own the local lands. Also, in this case, the UGTT militants intervened to support such demands.[374] The day Bouazizi set himself on fire, he was selling vegetables on the street, as an alternative source of income to the agricultural labour from which he had been expelled.

Kasserine too is very scarcely industrialised. In 2010, the region had 72 private sector industrial firms with 10 employees or more, employing 4,945 workers (API 2015a) out of a population of 431,821 (INS 2011). Here, the textile sector is followed

[372] According to an interviewee, the UGTT had a long-term presence only in two large factories, the German toys manufacturer Steiff and the Tunisian-owned Coala, a factory that made climate control devices. However, no known large struggles took place in these or other industrial units in the region at the time (Interview 88).
[373] Interviews 85, 90.
[374] Interviews 48, 85, 88.

by the production of construction materials (API 2015b). Kasserine features a Benetton plant, but by 2015 it was still non-unionised. To this one must add the *Société Nationale de Cellulose et de Papier Alfa* (SNCPA), a state-owned cellulose factory established in 1956 (GIZ 2015, p. 21). On a smaller scale, Kasserine's SNCPA has a similar role to Gafsa's CPG in the local political economy. Similar to the CPG, the SNCPA produces worrying levels of toxic pollution (Chennaoui 2016),[375] but it is seen by male precarious workers as the most obvious way to attain economic and thus existential security. It is therefore an ordinary target of protests for employment. Just like the CPG, the SNCPA does not need as many workers as it used to. The number of workers employed there fell from 1,200 in 2005 to 400 in 2015 (GIZ 2015, p. 24).[376] Following this, the workplace union lost leverage and corrupt practices augmented:

> It's a shame, the cellulose is screwed for good. Before 2005 we used to have some very good militants there, it has a good history. […] The cellulose and the CPG, it's the same. It's the corruption in hiring, in finance, in management, in production… (Interview 81)

It should not come as a surprise, then, that the SNCPA workers did not mobilise in solidarity with the protests of the precarious youth and its politicised allies:

> There was no movement inside of the factories, nothing at all. Outside, when they got off from work, this could change [i.e. some workers joined the demonstrations]. (Interview 78)

The uprising, then, was mainly the work of the working-class precarious fractions outside of the UGTT, in alliance with activists that included the politicised UGTT militants mainly located in public administration. This phenomenon can be interpreted in light of the UGTT's internal polarisation between "militants" and "bureaucrats". The breech of the populist social pact caused by the gradual retrenchment of substantial inducements, coupled with the relative increase in

[375] Due to the SNCPA's toxicity, the Kasserinians nicknamed it "the bomb".
[376] While in the CPG this was due to technological restructuring, the SNCPA did not upgrade its machinery, which – along with the diminution of protectionist duties – resulted in a loss of international competitiveness and therefore in a shrinking of production.

clientelism and the endurance of high repressiveness, contributed to the fact that the politicised unionists defended highly radical direct actions by a constituency that was not naturally their own – against the directives of their own union leadership. Dissent did not have real institutionalised outlets to be expressed through, and authoritarian corporatism could be abolished only by insurrectional means.

This cooperation between public administration trade unionists and precarious youths was also evident in the case of the high school students (who, in the marginal regions, are for the most part future precarious workers), who had been encouraged by their professors to mobilise on international issues, particularly the Palestinian cause. The coordination between students and professors was reactivated in the early stages of the uprising. However, it is also necessary to stress the ephemeral nature of this alliance between precarious youths and leftist unionists. The two groups were not linked through stable ideological and organisational ties, with the exception of the UDC (which had a very limited membership at the time). This became all the more evident when the Islamists, who had no organisational role in the uprising, won large pluralities in the 2011 elections, while the Left suffered a crushing defeat.

Additionally, one should not discount the role of factory workers in the industrial centres of the country. With the regional strikes in Sfax and Greater Tunis, the industrial estates mostly stood still and empty, resulting in great economic damage, and demonstrators asking for Ben Ali's departure flooded the city centres. Greater Tunis's governorate of Ben Arous has the second highest number of private sector manufacturing workers after Nabeul (API 2015a).[377] Importantly, many workers in the industrialised coastal regions originate from the marginalised interior. Internal migration, therefore, reinforced feelings of solidarity among workers across the marginalised and industrialised regions. The regional strikes, however, were the outcome of pressure coming from the struggles of precarious workers in the squares and the neighbourhoods, and not from shop-floor militancy in the factories. The public administration union militants served as a juncture between the precarious working-class fractions mobilising in the communities and the relatively more secure workers in the public sector and in manufacturing.

Compared to Morocco, Tunisia's relatively high working-class structural and

[377] While Sfax, Nabeul, and the Saheli regions (Monastir and Sousse) feature a plurality of workers in the textile sector, Ben Arous stands out for its engineering and electronics industries (API 2015b).

associational power, as well as the rigidity of the country's system of labour institutions, contributed to the radicalisation of the mobilisations and to their convergence in a temporally protracted and geographically diffuse anti-regime insurrection. Through the regional general strikes, the politicised militants used the UGTT's associational power to harness the economic leverage of public sector and industrial workers against the regime, bringing the struggle from the communities into the workplaces, despite the compromising position of the union's top leadership.

7.3 After the Uprising: Democracy without Social Justice

The aim of this section is not to analyse Tunisia's "democratic transition" but to outline the trends towards a new configuration of labour institutions, whereby the previous authoritarian corporatism is being replaced by a form of democratic corporatism, featuring a real easing of constraints and a stronger political influence of the UGTT, alongside a mixed trend in substantial inducements. The UGTT's inclusion in the new political system thus failed to satisfy the social justice demands that were at the core of the 2011 uprising.

The UGTT, as the country's largest civil society organisation, was central in the political negotiations that followed Ben Ali's departure, especially given the disarray of the RCD and the weakness of all political parties, with the exception of *Ennahda*. After 14 January 2011, the revolutionary movement tried to expand the gains of the uprising towards radical changes in the state institutions and in the path of economic development, demanding the election of a constituent assembly rather than the presidential elections proposed by the incumbent political elite (see Gherib 2017; Gobe 2012; Zemni 2015). However, with *Ennahda*'s electoral victory and the escalation of radical Islamist violence, the Left was cornered into an uneasy alliance with sections of the old regime.

On 17 January 2011, Ben Ali's PM Mohamed Ghannouchi announced a new national unity government that included three legal opposition parties (PDP, *Ettakatol*, *Ettajdid*) and three UGTT representatives (Houcine Dimassi, Abdeljélil Bédoui and Anouar Ben Gaddour). However, faced with outrage from the streets, UGTT and *Ettakatol* withdrew from the government the following day. As demonstrations continued daily, on 23 January 2011 protesters from all over the country started the First Kasbah; a permanent sit-in that demanded deep changes in the functioning and personnel of the state, as well as the realisation of the uprising's social justice

demands. The occupation was brutally dispersed by the police on 28 January, the day after the ministers that had been in charge under Ben Ali were removed from office. On 6 February, the government suspended the RCD, which would be dissolved on 9 March, but this did not demobilise the protests.

In order to give a more formal representation to the revolutionary movement *vis-à-vis* the government, the *Conseil National pour la Protection de la Révolution* (CNPR) was created on 11 February 2011. The CNPR was initially dominated by the UGTT and it included the leftist parties, *Ennahda*, and independent civil society organisations such as the LTDH. As Yousfi (2015, p. 112) points out, many activists mobilising on the streets criticised the CNPR over its lack of legitimate representativeness.

On 20 February 2011, the Second Kasbah started, with a more prominent role played by the political parties and the UGTT relative to the first. A week later, after a new series of demonstrations and deadly clashes, Mohamed Ghannouchi resigned and was replaced by the senior Destourian Beji Caïd Essebsi. Despite the continuing protests, Essebsi's unelected government agreed a new package of loans from the international financial institutions, through the G8 initiative known as the Deauville Partnership, committing the country to yet another round of neoliberal reforms (see Fernández-Molina 2019).

For many militants, CNPR's inability to obtain a government with more revolutionary credibility than Essebsi's was a major blow to the extension of the uprising's gains.[378] Under Essebsi, a new institution bearing the lengthy name *Haute Instance pour la Réalisation des Objectifs de la Révolution, de la Réforme Politique et de la Transition Démocratique* was put in place to substitute the dissolved parliament and incorporate the CNPR. Again, many activists criticised the *Haute Instance* and the UGTT's participation therein as a co-optation of the revolutionary process, because it legitimated the Essebsi government and therefore encouraged demobilisation.

The 23 October 2011 elections for the constitutional assembly (see Gana *et al.* 2012) gave *Ennahda* a comfortable plurality of 37%, while the PCOT – the best

[378] Some of the blame was laid at Jerad's feet, as the leader of the most powerful organisation in the CNPR. A widespread rumour is that the Ministry of the Interior blackmailed Jerad into accepting Essebsi's appointment by threatening to reveal some corruption affairs involving him (Interviews 78, 82, 87; Yousfi 2015, pp. 127-8). As seen above, this technique did exist under Ben Ali, but it is nonetheless impossible to verify such claims.

performer among a highly fragmented radical Left – received a humiliating 1.6% of the votes. Moncef Marzouki – leader of *Ennahda*'s ally party *Congrès pour la République* (CPR) – became President of the republic and *Ennahda*'s Hamadi Jebali was made PM. The election results were a shock to the UGTT militants, who saw their contribution to the overthrow of Ben Ali poorly compensated. They now perceived the labour confederation as a whole to be under threat from a conservative and anti-union government.

The UGTT 22nd Congress took place on 25-28 December 2011 in Tabarka. Three main lists were initially concurring. The consensual list was led by Houcine Abbassi, while Ali Romdhane ran in alliance with the Islamist delegates. The RSDM had planned to present its own list but, at the last minute, it split into one list led by Jilani Hammami and another led by Taieb Bouaicha. The consensual list easily won the day. While many had expected the UGTT rank-and-file to rid the union of its "collaborationist" leadership, a compromise between the Left and the traditional leadership was reached in the name of the defence of the organisation:

> The Congress took place in this context [of the UGTT feeling threatened by the *Ennahda*-led government] and everybody was conscious of this, therefore a consensus was necessary at that time. It was a consensus between a section of the old leadership with all their relationships etc. and the rising forces of those who had opposed the dictatorship. (Interview 57)

This resulted in an unprecedented share of NEC posts going to the union Left (see Hamzaoui 2013, pp. 1298-311), reflecting the recognition of the leftist militants' role in the struggle against Ben Ali and the absence of direct state pressures on leadership selection. A remarkable element of continuity, however, was the absence of women in the new NEC.

As the economic downturn following the uprising increased the power of the international financial institutions to guide economic policy, the mainstream political debate in Tunisian society was characterised by an escalation of tensions along the "modernist-Islamist" cleavage. This contributed to working-class de-composition, because workers became divided over such issues. Much of the opposition accused the government of taking steps towards a state-imposed Islamisation of society and of tolerating violent Islamist groups. Particularly notorious is the brutal police repression

of a large anti-government demonstration held in Tunis on Martyrs' Day, 9 April 2012. Given the weakness of all modernist parties, the UGTT played the role of chief counter-weight to *Ennahda*.

In parallel, protests and clashes over secure employment and local development continued throughout the country, while a massive strike wave gathered momentum. The number of workdays lost in strikes more than quadrupled between 2010 and 2011, and the figure remained much higher than before the uprising in the following years (see Graph 11, p. 221). Within industry, textiles and engineering were the most important sectors with regards to strikes, approximately reflecting the sectorial distribution of employment (Ministry of Social Affairs 2014). Sfax and Ben Arous stand out as the regions where strikes were most numerous (*Ibidem*), which also reflects their past traditions of labour struggles. In fact, Nabeul and the Saheli regions have comparable numbers of industrial workers but lower strike rates.

Interviewees interpreted the strike wave as a "change in mentality"[379] and a newly discovered freedom[380] prompted by the uprising. Or, with the benefit of hindsight: "We decided to set up a workplace union because we thought that with the revolution everything was going to change, while in the end nothing really changed".[381] Several strikes and sit-ins also demanded the departure of incumbent managers – usually ex-RCD members – under the widespread slogan "*Dégage*", the same that had been used to demand Ben Ali's departure. The UGTT intermediate structures were often consulted over the appointment of the new managers.

Ennahda accused the UGTT of encouraging strikes with unrealistic demands for "political reasons", that is, to overthrow the government. Indeed – probably for the first time in Tunisia's history – in 2012 the majority of strikes (56%) were authorised by the labour confederations and therefore legal, while in 2010 and 2011 authorised strikes were only about one third of the total (see Table 12, p. 243).

While the UGTT NEC certainly used the strike wave as a bargaining chip in the political negotiations, the strikes themselves were the initiative of workers who seized the opportunity to improve their wages and conditions as well as to defend themselves from the economic downturn. The augmented endorsement of the strikes was also an effect of trade union pluralism and of the new UGTT NEC's composition after the

[379] Interview 76.
[380] Interviews 53, 54.
[381] Interview 62.

22nd Congress, as proven by the fact that most strikes continued to be authorised in 2014, after the end of the *Ennahda*-led governments.

Table 12 – Share of legal strikes in Tunisia, 2010-2014

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
31%	33%	56%	59%	53%

Ministry of Social Affairs 2014.

The strikes were accompanied by mobilisations for secure employment and local development by precarious workers outside of the workplace, especially in the marginalised regions (Feltrin 2018b). These often took the form of roadblocks outside the most strategic productive sites of a particular locality (phosphate extraction in Gafsa, oil and gas extraction in Kebili and Tataouine, phosphate processing in Gabes, etc.), sometimes resulting in clashes with the police. While such protests were most often contained locally, the mobilisations expanded nationwide in January 2016 and January 2018. On several occasions, UGTT Local or Regional ECs were pressured to call general strikes in solidarity with the demands of the precarious. For example, this was the case of the 2012 Siliana revolt (see Belhadj and De Facci 2015). On 27 November 2012, the police repressed the demonstration of the regional general strike called by Siliana's UGTT, shooting protesters with buckshot. This engendered days of violent clashes against the police, which left at least 168 protesters wounded (*Nawaat*, 20 March 2013). The regional strike was suspended only on 2 December, after the government and the governorate agreed to grant some concessions.

The new wave of strikes and sit-ins was the object of a moralising campaign on the part of the media that was formerly allied to the regime. The strikers and the UGTT itself were targeted as the promoters of social chaos, undermining the urgent needs of stability and productivity:

> After the departure of the tyrant, the slogan "*Dégage*" should not be used in all circumstances but conserved on a linguistic level as a symbol of relief. […] [But today] the worker says "*Dégage*" to his boss, the clerk to his hierarchical superiors, the student to his professor or his director… These are very regrettable scenes that tarnish the image of the revolution,

> the noble cause for which many valiant Tunisians have sacrificed.[382] (*La presse de Tunisie*, 24 February 2011)

Parallel to the hegemonic discourse in Morocco, this view posited a sharp separation between socioeconomic and political demands, but in the context of the democratic transition the legitimacy attributed to them was inverted. As Héla Yousfi wrote:

> This attempt to neutralise the revolutionary process is carried out through a meticulous distinction between political questions – seen as the priority – and social struggles – seen as hindering the coming of stability…[383] (Yousfi 2013)

However, despite the calls for stability, tensions continued to escalate. Shortly after the Siliana revolt, on 4 December 2012, during the yearly commemorations for Farhat Hached, the pro-government *Ligue pour la Protection de la Révolution* stormed the UGTT HQ. The UGTT thus carried out a series of regional general strikes and threatened to stage Tunisia's first national general strike since 26 January 1978, before calling it off at the last minute. The crisis finally erupted when, on 6 February 2013, Islamist terrorists assassinated the *Watad Muahad*[384] SG Chokri Belaïd. The national general strike thus took place on 8 February, accompanied by massive demonstrations and clashes.

On 25 July 2013, however, Islamist terrorists shot dead Mohamed Brahmi, the SG of the Nasserist party *Harak Esh'ab* (Popular Movement). After a second national general strike held on 26 July 2013, protesters poured into Bardo Square and started an open-ended sit-in, asking for the resignation of the government. The sit-in was backed by the *Front de Salut National*, an anti-government coalition composed of the leftist parties together with Essebsi's *Nidaa Tounes*, a newly created modernist party including many ex-RCD members along with more left-leaning elements.[385]

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[382] Translated from French by the author.
[383] Translated from French by the author.
[384] After Ben Ali's downfall, most tendencies of the "*Watad* family" unified in a legal party called *Hizb El-Wataniyyn El-Demouqratiyyn El-Muahad* (Democratic Patriots' Unified Party), colloquially known as *Watad Muahad*.
[385] Including former UGTT SG Taïeb Baccouche, who was *Nidaa Tounes* SG at the time, and would later become Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The stand-off between government and opposition led to the series of negotiations known as the National Dialogue. The bargaining between the opposed ranks of political parties was mediated by the so-called *Quartet*; the UGTT, UTICA, LTDH, and National Bar Association. It is generally understood that the UGTT was the most influential among the four. The National Dialogue was essentially a power-sharing compromise between *Ennahda* and *Nidaa Tounes*, which led to an agreement on procedural democracy but left aside the exclusion of old-regime elites and issues related to social justice (Boubekeur 2016). The talks ended in January 2014, when the new constitution was approved, the *Ennahda*-led executive resigned in favour of a "technocratic" government, and the date for the new elections was set.

The 26 October 2014 parliamentary elections were won by *Nidaa Tounes* (37.6%), with *Ennahda* in the second position (see Ben Salem 2016). Essebsi also carried the day at the 23 November 2014 presidential elections, while Hamma Hammami – the candidate backed by the new Marxist and Arab nationalist coalition *Front Populaire* (FP) – reached 7.8%. On 5 February 2015, a new government led by *Nidaa Tounes* and including *Ennahda* was sworn in. The "grand coalition" government ushered the country into a period of relative institutional stabilisation, yet with the continuation of mass popular mobilisations on one side and Islamist terrorism on the other side.

The 2011 elections and the following political events had put the Left in a defensive position. The killings of the leftist leaders had increased fears that the Islamist-led government could turn authoritarian. This prompted the Left to accept an uneasy alliance with the ex-RCDists. The Bardo sit-in and the UGTT-brokered National Dialogue took place in the context of this alliance. Its political effects were extremely ambiguous. On the one hand, for the National Dialogue to succeed, the UGTT had to sacrifice, to a large extent, core demands of the 2011 uprising, particularly concerning social justice and the cleansing of the state of old regime incumbents. On the other hand, the bitter experiences of the other countries affected by the 2011 Arab uprisings signalled that the international balance of power was unfavourable to progressive change. The risk of an escalation of violence in which the jihadis and the state would have been the only players cannot be dismissed, from which would follow that the defence of the civil and political rights won by the uprising was worth a compromise. The evaluations of the union militants on the subject vary depending on which of the two sets of considerations are prioritised.

The widespread perception that the 2011 uprising failed to achieve significant progress towards social justice engendered strong feelings of disillusion and cynicism among workers, especially youths and progressive militants. The expression "we gained nothing" recurs over and over in interviews and real-life conversations. This claim is normally nuanced with the recognition that civil rights have improved, only to stress that they are under threat. The uprising has nonetheless torn the institutions of authoritarian corporatism into pieces. The conquest of civil and political rights inaugurated a new phase in labour institutions that is still in the making. The new pattern features a significant reduction of constraints, a reconfiguration of organisational inducements, and a mixed trend in substantial inducements.

The main novelty is the lowering of state constraints. With the expansion of civil rights, the state no longer has a significant say over the selection of the UGTT leadership. However, the easing of repression is absorbing the polarisation between "militants" and "bureaucrats". The militants have now gained representation in the UGTT NEC and moved from clandestine political groups persecuted by the state to legal parties with MPs in parliament. The most controversial faces of the old leadership, such Amara Abassi or Abdessalem Jerad, have been removed from their posts.

For what concerns constraints in the workplace, the ten-day notice and the authorisation of the central labour confederation are still necessary for a strike to be legal, but – as seen above – the ratio of authorised strikes has increased significantly. The post-2011 rise in union membership also suggested that workplace union representatives in the private sector were less victimised than before, but reports of illegal anti-union behaviours are still widespread.

Organisational inducements are transforming again. The state is no longer able to guarantee the UGTT's monopoly of representation, but the latter has been further incorporated into the decision-making mechanisms of the former. Trade union pluralism is now a reality. In 2011, the state recognised two new labour confederations, the *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (CGTT) and the *Union des Travailleurs de Tunisie* (UTT). The CGTT – led by former Gabes UGTT Regional SG Habib Guiza – had first attempted to obtain recognition in 2007, without success. In 2015, it was estimated to have about 30,000 members (European Commission 2015, p. 52). The UTT was founded by former UGTT SG Ismail Sahbani and its membership has been estimated at 100,000 (*Ibidem*). Additionally, in 2013, in

the midst of the Bardo crisis, some trade unionists close to *Ennahda* and the CPR exited the UGTT and formed the *Organisation Tunisienne du Travail*, but the union had a very limited membership. The check-off system for the public sector has now been extended to all labour confederations. However, the new unions do not compare with the UGTT in size and legitimacy, and the old confederation maintains its status as "most representative organisation" and therefore has exclusive membership in all national tripartite bodies and bargaining rounds.

On 14 January 2013, the UGTT signed a tripartite social pact with the UTICA and the government, creating provisions to form a National Council for Social Dialogue to further institutionalise tripartism. This measure could give the UGTT formalised access to social and even political decision-making, but it has not yet been implemented.[386] However, the UGTT now wields great informal power in influencing the composition of governments, so much so that it is often described in the news as the "all-powerful" union of Tunisia (e.g. *Jeune Afrique*, 7 June 2018). In fact, in summer 2016, the UGTT was included in the negotiations for the creation of a new national unity government (whose main parties were *Nidaa Tounes* and *Ennahda*) and, along with the UTICA, it signed the Carthage Pact that gave a mandate to the new executive. Two former UGTT NEC members became ministers: Mohamed Trabelsi for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Abid Briki for the Ministry of Public Administration (Briki, however, was dismissed in March 2017).[387]

However, given Tunisia's scarce negotiating power *vis-à-vis* the "international community", among other things, the UGTT's power in influencing the composition of governments was not accompanied by a capacity to significantly steer their policies away from a neoliberal framework. The stand-off between the countervailing pressures of workers' mobilisations and conditionality by foreign lenders was aggravated by the economic downturn caused by political instability and terrorist attacks. However, relatively high working-class power resulted in wage rigidity and in the fact that the economic crisis could not be managed through overtly repressive and deflationary policies. Mahmoud Ben Romdhane notes that, in recent years:

[386] In return, since 2012, the UGTT was represented in the so-called 7+7 Commission (then 4+4 Commission), a board with an equal number of government and union representatives, in charge of dialogue on wages and conditions in public administration and relevant policy issues.
[387] The union was also seen as the main force behind the dismissals of Minister of Health Saïd Aïdi, Minister of Education Néji Jalloul, and Minister of Social Affairs Mahmoud Ben Romdhane.

> [S]trikes and occupations were given free rein, reaching unprecedented levels; some vital sectors were brought to a standstill or forced to slow down production […]. Contrary to the former crisis [that of the 1980s], the current crisis is taking place in a context in which trade unionism is a key actor and basic freedoms are generally respected.[388] (Ben Romdhane 2018, p. 35)

Employment in public administration increased from 435,487 posts in 2010 to 591,174 in 2014 (INS 2016a), through a wave of new recruitments and the direct hiring – as demanded by the UGTT in 2011 – of all the outsourced employees working for the public administration (see King 2013). SOEs and state-sponsored employment schemes also increased their employees. According to Ben Romdhane, real wages in the formal sector overall increased faster than GDP in the 2011-2016 period (Ben Romdhane 2018, pp. 124-40).

Yet inflation rates remained high and the official unemployment rate rose from 13% in 2010 to 15.3% in 2015, despite the new public sector hires, because of low investment in the private sector. The quality of welfare services seems to have deteriorated due to the renewed fiscal crisis of the state, and the marginalisation of the interior regions has seen no significant improvement. This gave rise to the generalised judgement that the social justice demands of the 2011 uprising remained unachieved. Socioeconomic grievances, especially the demands for secure employment and local development, were again central in the widespread social unrest that took place in the years following the uprising and continues until today.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the cycle of struggle that began with the 2008 Gafsa revolt and is still ongoing was able to bring down Ben Ali's regime and trigger a democratic transition, while being unable to address its very core demands, which revolved around secure employment, local development, and – more generally – social justice.

[388] Translated from French by the author.

In the late 2000s, Tunisia's rigid system of labour institutions encouraged an internal polarisation within the UGTT between "militants" and "bureaucrats", the former actively supporting the precarious youth's struggles and the latter upholding a policy of compromise with the regime. While during the Gafsa revolt the compromising line won the day, in January 2011 the politicised militants were able to help spread the protests, pressuring the National Administrative Commission to authorise regional general strikes in solidarity with the mobilisations of precarious workers.

Compared to Morocco, Tunisia had both a more rigid system of labour institutions and stronger working-class power. Higher levels of "human development" and welfare provisions (e.g. education) constituted more resources for the mobilisation of non-unionised precarious workers in the marginalised regions. The larger size of industry, the public sector, and the share of workers enjoying relative job security allowed the secure workers to mobilise effectively in solidarity with the precarious. In order for this to actually happen, the initiative of activists on the ground was crucial in building pressure on the UGTT's top leadership, so that the union's associational power could be used to bring into existence solidarity between different working-class fractions.

These findings are in line with Beinin (2016) and Yousfi's (2015) work, which show that the UGTT was an important contributor to Tunisia's uprising, despite the compromising line of its top leadership. This thesis, however, compares Tunisia to Morocco, showing that higher working-class power and rigid institutions are relevant factors in understanding the different roles of the trade unions in the two countries. Moreover, the thesis differs from their valuable analyses mainly in terms of its theoretical understanding of class (see Chapter 1). This thesis adopted an autonomist-inspired, expanded concept of the working class, which encompasses all those who are excluded from significant ownership and control of capital, including the "unemployed", unwaged workers, and intellectual workers. The January 2011 convergence of the struggles of precarious workers, relatively secure industrial workers, and intellectual workers (mostly but not solely from public administration) is not interpreted here as a cross-class coalition but as working-class re-composition. This allows for a more straightforward interpretation of the uprising as class struggle, despite the non-central role of manufacturing workers. It also provides a framework for the analysis of the relations between precarious workers' community struggles and

the trade unions.

With the defeat of the 2011 Arab uprisings in the other countries of the region and the renewed influence of international capital on Tunisia's economic policy, the Tunisian working class was, to a significant extent, de-composed along the "modernist-Islamist" cleavage. Precarious workers' mobilisations continued, especially in the marginalised regions, but after the National Dialogue they did not find the same level of support from other working-class fractions. While Tunisia's relatively high working-class power facilitated the achievement of democracy, the core demands of the current cycle of struggle remain unsatisfied.

Conclusion: Broadening Perspectives on Trade Unions

A History of Power

As conveyed by the title of this thesis, trade unions manoeuvre between the hammer of the working class and the anvil of the state and capital. The preceding pages demonstrated that it is crucial to analyse the contrasting pressures from below and from above, as well as the union officials' responses to them, to understand the role of trade unions in struggles for social justice and democracy. In addition, it was shown that examinations of pressures from below can be fruitfully extended far beyond union members.

This thesis sought to understand the role of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions in the 2011 Arab uprisings and their outcomes. This task was carried out through a historical sociology approach, centred on how contingent social struggles shape and change the structures of society in time. In particular, the research focused on the ways in which successive rounds of class struggles transformed Morocco and Tunisia's balances of class power and systems of labour institutions. In the 2011 uprisings, the latter structures influenced, in turn, the choices of workers, trade unionists, activists, as well as regime elites, who once again transformed such structures in new directions. This historical and struggle-centred approach has thus brought to the fore the dialectical relationship between structure and agency, considering the weight of the former but assigning a constituent role to the latter. In order to reach its objectives, the thesis mobilised evidence collected through semi-structured interviews, press archives, socioeconomic statistics, labour legislation, memoirs of labour activists, and other documents produced by the trade unions and the state.

The core argument of the thesis is that class struggles are constituent of labour institutions, and that the latter are grounded in specific balances of class power. Therefore, class struggle and class power should be given analytical primacy in the investigation of the trade unions' political role. Furthermore, in detecting class struggles and assessing working-class power, an expanded conception of working class – including unwaged workers – allows one to see the relations between the

unions and the community struggles of precarious workers, which are an important element of Morocco and Tunisia's recent history.

As shown throughout the thesis, both the level of working-class power (relatively high vs. low) and the type of labour institutions (relatively rigid vs. flexible) were important factors facing Moroccan and Tunisian labour actors when elaborating their choices during the 2011 uprisings. These two kinds of factors stand in a hierarchical relation with one another, in the sense that the level of working-class power is critical in contributing to explaining the direction and magnitude of change, while the institutional framework mostly contributes to understanding why this change happened in an abrupt and insurrectional manner or in a gradual and negotiated way. This stress on class power is an alternative to institution-based approaches, which had understood union pluralist Morocco as the country where the trade unions were best placed to advance democratic change, and Tunisian labour as crippled by the single-trade union corporatist arrangement. The different roles of Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions, therefore, are ultimately rooted in antagonistically constructed *power relations*.

The outcomes under investigation do not stand in a deterministic relation to the level of working-class power or the type of labour institutions in place. These elements only tend to increase the likelihood, real or perceived, of success of some strategies by the relevant actors and to decrease the plausibility of others. Both sets of factors were historically constructed through successive rounds of social – and particularly class – struggles, and they can change through further struggles. Class power and labour institutions by themselves, thus, do not *explain* any outcomes. They merely point to a range of likelier outcomes that cannot in any case be foreseen beforehand. Such factors *contribute* to an explanation, which would however be uncomplete without the narrative of the contingent strategies actually adopted by the relevant actors.

In Morocco, working-class power was relatively low, and the system of labour institutions relatively flexible. The absence of a former populist social pact made the retrenchment of substantial inducements in the neoliberal phase less dramatic and lowered workers' expectations. Compared to the Tunisian case, in the 2011 uprising, the trade unions faced weaker pressures from below to take an active role in workers' protests for social justice and democracy. Furthermore, the unions themselves had less resources to mobilise against the regime, which made radical action in support of the

social movements less likely to succeed. At the same time, these struggles played out in a flexible institutional framework, meaning that workers' mobilisations could be partially accommodated in a gradual and negotiated way. This contributes to an explanation of why all Moroccan labour confederations except for the CDT supported the constitutional reform led by the Palace, in the face of opposition from the M20Fev, and why no labour confederation took radical action – e.g. political general strikes – in support of the movement. The main confederations held this course of action despite their initial sympathy towards the M20Fev. The unions faced weaker pressures to oppose the constitutional reform and they themselves had less power to stop its approval. At the same time, a more flexible institutional system – particularly trade union pluralism, party mediation between the unions and the state, and institutionalised social dialogue – allowed the trade unions to channel workers' grievances in a way that defused tensions. A key reason – among others – for the endurance of a nondemocratic and highly unequal regime in Morocco lies in the low power of the working class. Institutional flexibility better contributes to explain the endurance of *this* regime as opposed to its downfall and replacement with a new, nondemocratic one.

In Tunisia, working-class power was relatively high, and the system of labour institutions relatively rigid. The existence of a former populist social pact made the neoliberal retrenchment of substantial inducements more visible and frustrated workers' expectations. Compared to the Moroccan case, the UGTT faced stronger pressures from below, especially by non-unionised precarious workers as well as public administration union activists, to take an active role in the uprising. Furthermore, the UGTT itself had more resources to mobilise in solidarity with the protests, as seen most notably in the regional general strikes of January 2011. Relatively high working-class power thus helps to explain why the UGTT's top leadership, despite its policy of compromise with the regime, authorised radical action against that same regime. Such struggles met a rigid institutional framework, which was unable to accommodate them in a gradual and negotiated way. This made abrupt and insurrectional change more likely. The rigid institutional system in place – characterised by stiff repression, a single trade union, the absence of party mediation between the UGTT and the state, and the narrow nature of union incorporation – exasperated tensions rather than defusing them, encouraging the regime to resort to sheer violence. An important reason for the advent of representative democracy in

Tunisia lies in the relatively high level of working-class power that obtained in the country. Institutional rigidity, instead, contributes to explaining the abrupt and insurrectional manner in which democracy was achieved.

This thesis provided an analysis of the role of the Moroccan and Tunisian trade unions in the 2011 uprisings, however, it cannot be expected to deliver exact predictions of their future contributions to struggles for social justice and democracy. This thesis's theoretical framework is based on the assumption that social struggles can change the structures of society in contingent and unpredictable ways. Factors like the balance of class power or the system of labour institutions only constitute the context that makes certain decisions by the relevant actors seemingly more or less likely to succeed.

In particular, the findings of the thesis do not exclude future democratisation in Morocco. In fact, working-class power in Morocco appears to be higher than in most other Arab countries and could increase significantly relative to its 2011 levels. Additionally, working-class power is only one among several factors that can facilitate democratisation. The Moroccan unions could be further reformed in a militant and democratic direction, or new oppositional labour organisations could appear. Class struggles will also probably develop outside of any trade union framework. This is indeed what happened with the more recent social movements of the *Hirak Esh'aby* of the Rif and the *Hirak* of Jerada, which saw once again precarious workers mobilising for secure employment and local development in their communities.

Conversely, these conclusions do not idealise Tunisia as a workers' paradise – far from it. Tunisian workers' power is high *relative* to the standards of a staunchly labour-repressive region. Moreover, Tunisia has democratised in a time when democracy itself is undergoing a deep crisis. Today, it is widely recognised that the citizens of democratic countries are unable to use elected governments to reduce inequality and shape substantial alternatives to the dominant neoliberal trend. In other words, capitalist democracy is failing to deliver on social justice. This was seen clearly in post-2011 Tunisia, where slow economic growth and rising public debt have increased the power of the international financial institutions to determine economic policy regardless of the ideological commitments of state officials. In the first three years following the uprising, the political debate was thus mostly channelled towards cultural identity issues revolving around the place of religion in society. Since democratisation, Tunisian workers have faced rising unemployment and declining

standards of living. The UGTT's political inclusion in the new order has failed to result in progress towards the aspirations of social justice that were at the core of the uprising, putting the union in a difficult position, especially *vis-à-vis* the precarious fractions of the working class.

Precarious Workers and Trade Unions

This thesis contributed to existing knowledge by addressing the puzzle of why labour institutions in Morocco and Tunisia did not have the effects envisaged by the former institution-based literature on North African labour – to which this thesis is in any case indebted (e.g. Bellin 2002; Cammett and Posusney 2010). The comparison showed that labour institutions, while significant, were not the only relevant factor for understanding the context in which the trade unions operated in the two countries, and that working-class power should be given a more prominent place. Working-class power cannot be simply evinced from the framework of trade union-state relations, because the working class – and therefore class struggle and class power – transcends its official organisations in ways that are too politically significant to be heuristically excluded. This means that the role of trade unionism in struggles for social justice and democracy can be better understood if labour institutions are analysed in their relation to class struggle and the balance of class power, even when establishing comparisons in which the institutional framework appears to be decisive at first glance. Therefore, this thesis has systematically disaggregated workers from trade union officials through the analysis of state-provided substantial inducements – in the interest of the workers – and organisational inducements – in the interest of trade union officials. This conceptualisation of the possibility of divergent interests between workers and trade union officials allowed to analyse the pressures from the workers – both unionised and non-unionised – on the trade unions and the divergences within the trade unions themselves.

Furthermore, this research – different from other Marxist analyses (e.g. Alexander and Bassiouny 2014; Beinin 2016) – showed for the first time the usefulness of an autonomist-inspired, expanded, heterodox conception of the working class in the study of North African workers. In this thesis, phrases like "working-class composition", "working-class power", and "class struggle" refer to more than simply factory workers or waged employees. Avoiding the fetishisation of manual labour or the wage, the conception of working class espoused here encompasses all those who

are on the receiving end of the capital relation. This includes those who, in other analyses, are seen as groups external to the working-class composition, such as the "lumpenproletariat" (precarious workers, in the terminology of this thesis) and a sizable section of what is normally called the "middle class" (intellectual workers, in the terminology of this thesis). Dispossession from significant ownership and control of the means of production is the lowest common denominator among all these social groups.

Autonomist Marxism is a diverse theoretical tradition, and it can only be applied to Global South realities selectively. The hegemony of cooperative networks of immaterial labour hypothesised by Hardt and Negri (2000) and their associates seems scarcely appropriate to understand the struggles of – in the case of this thesis – North African workers. In fact, while educational levels have risen over time, opportunities for qualified employment have not risen at the same rate, and thus the influence of immaterial labour is limited – especially in the marginalised areas – and cannot provide the main infrastructure for mobilisation, which is rather given by communal solidarities (Feltrin 2018b). However, autonomist feminism – with its attention to subjects at the lower end of the global working-class composition – is better equipped to theorise the significance of unwaged workers and community-based mobilisations, which came to the fore in the latest cycle of struggle. The present thesis has demonstrated that – while this very seldom happens – autonomist Marxism can be fruitfully adapted to the study of workers in the Global South.

As seen above, the precarious fractions of the working class were actually the first to challenge the Tunisian regime, and their protests were crucial in securing the UGTT's involvement. Beyond Tunisia, the role of precarious workers is even more important today than it was in the first decades after WWII. In fact, the neoliberal phase of capitalism has been eroding Keynesianism across the Global North and populism in many Global South countries. These class compromises had featured the extension of job security and unionisation to expanding segments of the workforce. Since the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, such social pacts have been suspended and the trend towards the expansion of job security has been inverted or weakened depending on the national case. This means that a conception of working class able to include all forms of precarious labour is increasingly valuable in the study of workers' mobilisations and trade unionism today.

Based on the ideas developed in this thesis, a compelling direction for new

research is the study of precarious workers' formal and informal organising as part of the construction of overall working-class power. This can go from research on informal and everyday communal solidarities to exceptional and confrontational social movements or to formally structured organisations (e.g. unions of the unemployed). For what concerns the trade unions, this line of inquiry would be centred on the extent to which the trade unions can relate to these forms of precarious workers' organising or, vice versa, the extent to which precarious workers can pressure the unions to act upon their demands. While this thesis has operated at the national level, ethnographic research could complement it with more in-depth accounts of how precarious workers engage in hidden forms of work, organise in their communities, and interact with official organisations.

The unions can no longer base their strategies on the presupposition that capitalist development goes hand in hand with the expansion of job security and trade union density. Capitalist development still tends to raise some aspects of working-class power, for example in education and health, but this is conditional upon class struggles over the distribution of resources. Such struggles are more effectively waged when precarious workers mobilise, but, due to their employment conditions, the precarious face major difficulties in waging successful collective action through traditional workplace unions, because they are normally not unified by the condition of working in large numbers under the same employer. A strategic site of organisation for the precarious is the realm of social reproduction – the community. This has been shown in the neighbourhood- and village-based informal organisation of the precarious in both Morocco and Tunisia. The precarious can thus organise autonomously in their communities and then pressure the trade unions to support their grievances. Alternatively, the trade unions can opt for a social and community unionism that would accompany traditional workplace unionism, although so far this has not happened to a significant extent in Morocco or Tunisia. In any case, the post-2011 class struggles in the two countries provide a great wealth of understudied mobilisations led by the precarious, from the *Hirak Esh'aby* of the Rif in Morocco to the blockades of mineral extraction in southern Tunisia, to mention just two notable examples.

Autonomist Marxism – particularly its feminist and feminist-inspired strands, with their theorisation of unwaged labour and the sphere of reproduction as integrated into the circuit of capital accumulation – provides apt conceptual tools that have never

been applied before to study social mobilisations in this region.

In 1972, autonomist feminist Selma James wrote a scathing assessment of the relations between the trade unions and unwaged workers:

> It is not simply that they [the unions] don't organize [the unwaged]; it is that the union *prevents* such organization, by following organizationally the way capital is organized: a fragmented class, divided into those who have wages and those who don't. *The unemployed, the old, the ill, the children, and housewives are unwaged.* So the unions ignore us and thereby they separate us from each other and from the waged. That is, they structurally make a generalized struggle impossible. (James 2012, p. 66, italics in the original)

Forty years later, James returned to her analysis, commenting that:

> [I]t's clear that my critique of the unions was too absolute. It takes no account of the possibility of a mass takeover by members, or even people inside who are fighting to reclaim the unions […and] put facilities and even some funds at the disposal of the union's grassroots as well as the community generally. (*Ibid.*, p. 61)

The story recounted here is exactly that of the pitfalls and successes – sometimes abrupt and unexpected – of this contest to put the trade unions at the service of struggles for social justice and democracy. In such an endeavour, representative democracy in capitalism cannot be seen as the ultimate end, as the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings confirmed. The inability of the Tunisian democracy to address the needs of most of the population by delivering on social justice poses a serious legitimacy problem for democracy in the region as a whole. The struggles of the future will tell whether this dilemma will be resolved through more democracy or a full-scale return to authoritarianism.

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List of Interviews

Morocco

Interview 1: Casablanca, 18 January 2016. Member of the CDT NEC.

Interview 2: Casablanca, 22 January 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev.

Interview 3: Rabat, 26 January 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev and activist in the UMT-FNE.

Interview 4: Casablanca, 27 January 2016. CDT-SNP SG.

Interview 5: Casablanca, 28 January 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev.

Interview 6: Casablanca, 29 January 2016. Member of the UMT NEC.

Interview 7: Rabat, 29 January 2016. Ex member of the UMT-Rabat regional EC.

Interview 8: Rabat, 8 March 2016. High-level civil servant in the Ministry of Labour.

Interview 9: Rabat, 14 March 2016. Labour inspector in the city of Rabat.

Interview 10: Rabat, 14 March 2016. Activist in the UMT-USF.

Interview 11: Fes, 15 March 2016. Ex workplace union representative in the telecommunications sector with the UGTM.

Interview 12: Fes, 15 March 2016. Activist in the FDT-SNE.

Interview 13: Fes, 16 March 2016. UMT-FNOFCL-Fes SG.

Interview 14: Fes, 16 March 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev and activist in the FDT-SNE.

Interview 15: Fes, 17 March 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev.

Interview 16: Fes, 17 March 2016. Member of the FDT NEC.

Interview 17: Fes, 18 March 2016. CDT-Fes SG.

Interview 18: Rabat, 24 March 2016. FDT NEC member.

Interview 19: Agadir, 28 March 2016. Labour activist and journalist.

Interview 20: Agadir, 29 March 2016. CDT-Agadir SG.

Interview 21: Agadir, 30 March 2016. Trade union leader of the fishermen, first with the CDT and then independent.

Interview 22: Agadir, 31 March 2016. Activist in the ANDCM.

Interview 23: Marrakesh, 4 April 2016. Activist in the UMT-FNOFCL and the AMDH.

Interview 24: Marrakesh, 8 April 2016. Activist in the UMT-FNSA and ex member of the UMT-Marrakesh regional EC.

Interview 25: Marrakesh, 9 April 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev.

Interview 26: Rabat, 12 April 2016. Member of the UMT-FNE-CD NEC.

Interview 27: Mohammedia, 13 April 2016. Labour activist.

Interview 28: Rabat, 18 April 2016. Member of the UGTM NEC.

Interview 29: Rabat, 20 April 2016. UMT-FNSA-SNFMA SG (*Syndicat National des Fonctionnaires du Ministère de l'Agriculture*) and ex SG of the UMT-OFSA (*Organisation de la Femme du Secteur Agricole*).

Interview 30: Rabat, 21 April 2016. Activist in the UMT-Rabat, the UMT-FNE-CD, and the AMDH.

Interview 31: Khouribga, 30 April 2016. Workplace union representative in the mining sector with the UMT.

Interview 32: Mohammedia, 2 May 2016. Member of the CDT NEC.

Interview 33: Inezgane, 12 May 2016. Ex workplace union representative in the food sector with the CDT.

Interview 34: Agadir, 13 May 2016. Ex activist in the M20Fev.

Interview 35: Temara, 20 May 2016. Ex SG of the UMT-FNSA.

Interview 36: Casablanca, 21 May 2016. Ex workplace union representative in the metalworking sector with the UMT.

Interview 37: Tangier, 24 May 2016. Activist with the UMT-FNE-CD.

Interview 38: Tangier, 24 May 2016. Worker in the food sector.

Interview 39: Tangier, 24 May 2016. Workers in the textile sector.

Interview 40: Tangier, 24 May 2016. Workplace union representative with the UMT-USIB.

Interview 41: Tangier, 25 May 2016. Workplace union representative with the UMT-FNS (*Fédération Nationale de la Santé*).

Interview 42: Tangier, 25 May 2016. Workplace union representative with the UMT-FNE-CD.

Interview 43: Tangier, 26 May 2016. Member of the UMT-Amendis and activist with the AMDH.

Interview 44: Casablanca, 8 June 2016. Workplace union representatives in the ports sector with the UMT.

Interview 45: Rabat, 10 June 2016. Workers in the food sector.

Interview 46: Rabat, 15 June 2016. Ex workplace union representative in the transport sector with the UMT.

Interview 47: Bristol, 18 December 2016. PhD student specialising on Moroccan agribusiness workers.

Tunisia

Interview 48: Tunis, 8 September 2015. Ex activist in the UGTT-FGPT (*Fédération Générale des Postes et Télécommunications*).

Interview 49: Tunis, 10 September 2015. Activist in the revolutionary youth movement and in the *Manich Msamah* (I Don't Forgive) campaign.

Interview 50: Tunis, 11 September 2015. Workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGTC (*Fédération Générale des Télécommunications*).

Interview 51: Tunis, 15 September 2015. Member of the UGET NEC.

Interview 52: Tunis, 23 September 2015. Activist in the UGTT-FGPT.

Interview 53: Tunis, 26 September 2015. Member of the UGTT-FGATCA NEC (*Fédération Générale de l'Alimentation et du Tourisme et de Commerce et de l'Artisanat*) and of the LTDH NEC.

Interview 54: Tunis, 28 September 2015. Workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGEG (*Fédération Générale de l'Énergie et du Gaz*).

Interview 55: Tunis, 29 September 2015. Senior researcher at the ITCEQ (*Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Études Quantitatives*).

Interview 56: Tunis, 30 September 2015. Ex UGTT-FGESRS SG (*Fédération Générale de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique*) and consultant in economic policy for the UGTT-NEC.

Interview 57: Tunis, 1 October 2015. Ex activist in the UGTT-SGES, ex member of the UGTT-Tunis regional EC, and MP with the FP.

Interview 58: Tunis, 2 October 2015. Member of the UGTT-FGC NEC (*Fédération Générale des Cheminots*).

Interview 59: Tunis, 5 October 2015. High-level civil servant at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Interview 60: Tunis, 6 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGT (*Fédération Générale du Transport*).

Interview 61: Tunis, 7 October 2015. Activist in the revolutionary youth movement and member of the *Observatoire Tunisien de l'Économie*.

Interview 62: Tunis, 9 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGOME (*Fédération Générale des Ouvriers de la Métallurgie et de l'Électronique*).

Interview 63: Tunis, 12 October 2015. Activist in the UGTT-FGESRS and expert on the UGTT.

Interview 64: Tunis, 12 October 2015. High-level civil servant at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Interview 65: Tunis, 15 October 2015. Ex UGTT-SGES SG.

Interview 66: Tunis, 16 October 2015. Ex UGTT-FGESRS SG and expert on the UGTT.

Interview 67: Gafsa, 19 October 2015. Activist in the UGTT-SGEB and member of the UGTT-Gafsa regional EC.

Interview 68: Gafsa, 19 October 2015. Ex activist in the UDC, then activist in the UGTT-FGP (*Fédération Générale de la Pétrochimie*).

Interview 69: Mdhila, 19 October 2015. Activist in the UGTT-FGP and in the LTDH.

Interview 70: Redeyef, 21 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGS (*Fédération Générale de la Santé*).

Interview 71: Gafsa, 22 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGES.

Interview 72: Gafsa, 22 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGEB.

Interview 73: Metlaoui, 23 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGEB.

Interview 74: Regueb, 26 October 2015. Activist in the revolutionary youth movement, the UDC, and then the UGTT-SGEB.

Interview 75: Regueb, 26 October 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGEB.

Interview 76: Tunis, 30 October 2015. Labour inspector in the Tunis governorate.

Interview 77: Tunis, 2 November 2015. Activist in the UGTT-FGP and member of the UGTT-Tunis regional EC.

Interview 78: Kasserine, 4 November 2015. Activist in the revolutionary youth movement and the UDC.

Interview 79: Kasserine, 5 November 2015. Activist in the UGTT-SGEB.

Interview 80: Kasserine, 5 November 2015. Activist in the UGTT-FGEG.

Interview 81: Kasserine, 6 November 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGES.

Interview 82: Sfax, 19 November 2015. Workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGESRS.

Interview 83: Sfax, 20 November 2015. UGTT-FGC-Sfax SG.

Interview 84: Sfax, 20 November 2015. UGTT-FGTHCC-Sfax SG (*Fédération Générale du Textile, Habillement, Chaussures et Cuir*).

Interview 85: Tunis, 30 November 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGES (in Sidi Bouzid).

Interview 86: Tunis, 2 December 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-FGFP (*Fédération Générale des Finances et Plans*).

Interview 87: Tunis, 4 December 2015. Ex UGTT-SGES SG.

Interview 88: Sidi Bouzid, 8 December 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT-SGEB, and member of the UGTT-Sidi Bouzid regional EC.

Interview 89: Sidi Bouzid, 8 December 2015. Activist in the Bar Association.

Interview 90: Sidi Bouzid, 8 December 2015. UGTT-FGA-Sidi Bouzid SG (*Fédération Générale de l'Agriculture*).

Interview 91: Tunis, 10 December 2015. Ex workplace union representative with the UGTT- UGTT-FGATCA and ex UGTT-Tunis regional SG.

Interview 92: Tunis, 17 December 2015. Ex ATFD SG and member of the UGTT-SGMPCDHU NEC **(***Syndicat Général des Médecins des Pharmaciens des Chirurgiens-Dentistes Hospitaliers Universitaires*).

Interview 93: Tunis, 18 December 2015. Director of the UGTT research department.

Interview 94: Tunis, 18 December 2015. Ex UGTT-FGBEF SG (*Fédération Générale des Banques et des Établissements Financiers*).

Appendix of Selected Documents

1. Article on the UMT's Controversies[390]

The UMT: When Struggle and 'Mismanagement' Coexist

The UMT is the oldest union in Morocco and the biggest. However, as much as it is big and present among the workers, administrative and financial "corruption" is present among its ranks. A journalist from *Al-Massae* put himself in the workers' shoes and went investigating among the walls and papers of the "great old union", but he came up against a wall of silence erected by the so-called "bureaucrats" and the self-styled "democrats" alike. […]

The UMT's assets

In December 2010, the 10th UMT Congress, and the first in the absence of Mahjoub Ben Seddik, approved the mandatory resolution of appointing a committee charged with carrying out an audit of the UMT's assets. A number of delegates insisted especially on the recovery of many resources and assets of the union that Mahjoub Ben Seddik had turned into his private property, by registering them under his name or the name of his children. Most importantly, the printing press IMPRIGEMA – which had an estimated value of tens of millions of dirhams and was located in the heart of Casablanca – used to give the union a profit of 3 million dirhams per year. Then Mahjoub Ben Seddik's son sold its building to property developers and moved the press to an industrial estate in Casablanca. The same fate was suffered by eight villas in Casablanca's Anfa neighbourhood and several agricultural lands in the vicinity of Berrechid – Mahjoub Ben Seddik turned them into his personal property.

The Congress delegates also discussed the revelations of former trade unionist Hassan Bazwi in his book *L'UMT: Entre le rêve et la réalité*, which exposed the deceased *zaïm*'s "embezzlements" of the working class's finances. For example, in 1985, he received 100,000 dollars from the union of Arab teachers, with the aim of

[390] The article was translated from Arabic by Marwa Talhaoui and the author. The documents were abridged in order to comply with the word limit for the Appendix.

creating “an exemplary centre for the study of Arabic”. But “the project disappeared and the 100,000 dollars with it; the union of Arab teachers demanded its money back and threatened to bring the case to court, to no avail”. Similarly, Mahjoub Ben Seddik received 300,000 dollars in instalments, within the framework of a cooperation agreement with the Arab Labour Organisation, and nobody knows what happened to that sum... Additionally, a Moroccan political party paid Ben Seddik a sum of up to 4.5 million dirhams to print electoral posters in the UMT’s press, and nobody knows where the money went. Moreover, no union leader knows about the 780,000 dirhams the *zaïm* had collected to relaunch one of the union’s newspapers.

The Congress ended, but the committee for the audit of the UMT’s assets did not fulfil its mission and nobody speaks anymore about the tens of millions that the deceased *zaïm* Mahjoub Ben Seddik “robbed” in terms of the workers’ “surplus value” and of the credibility of trade unionism in the eyes of millions of Moroccans. […]

Where is the teachers’ money?

At the beginning of February 2012, the National Brigade of the Judicial Police interrogated a group of directors of the MGEN, which is presided over by M’hmed Ghayour. This was based on a 2009 IGF report accusing Ghayour of benefiting from illegal refunds of up to 40,000 dirhams per month since 1987, despite the fact that the *dahir* of 1963 on the *mutuelles* and the law on the *mutuelles* state that: “Work in the *mutuelles* is voluntary [i.e. unpaid]”. Ghayour, who despite being over eighty years old was elected to the last UMT NEC, is also accused of the “acquisition” of 23.4 million dirhams from the MGEN. Concerning health, the IGF report documents a “fraud” by the MGEN regarding the beneficiaries of medical services, in which the ill were obliged to pay 70 dirhams even if, according to the internal statute of the *mutuelle*, the participants do not have to pay any contribution to be treated. According to the report, the MGEN was able to obtain more than 3 million dirhams in this way.

Concerning public procurement, the IGF report accuses M’hmed Ghayour of having conceded most of the MGEN’s contracts to the “Unity Distribution Company” – which is owned by his son, Rachid Ghayour – without respecting the code on public procurement. […]

Concerning hiring, the report says that M’hmed Ghayour hired his brother, Abderrahman Ghayour, who has no relation to the MGEN, in the position of “communication officer”, for a salary of 32,500 dirhams. He also hired his son Rachid,

and gave him an "excellent" salary for which he does not show up to work, as well as his nephew Ibrahim Ghayour, in the Kenitra MGEN office. The IGF report also states that recruitment in the MGEN is subject to a logic of "clientelism and nepotism". […]

The FNE lacks organisation!

All those who knew Mahjoub Ben Seddik remember he deeply hated teaching and teachers. […] Therefore, he appointed his friend M'hmed Ghayour as FNE SG, and the federation has never held a Congress since March 1995. Critics of the FNE's performance affirm the union suffers from an arbitrary management that does not leave any space for creativity and initiative, nor prevents the spreading of corruption. This is caused by the absence of a financial report and by the aleatory and "opaque" distribution of membership cards. The federation also suffers from the lack of a platform of demands based on serious debate, a confused conception of the question of alliances, the "coups" against "disloyal" ECs, the suspension of "democratic" trade unionists from their positions, and the withdrawal of their benefits, such as the trade union secondment. […] Bechir El-Housseini is considered by the dissidents in M'hmed Ghayour's union as a source of the FNE's "backwardness".

Ahmed El-Masyh, former vice-SG of Khemisset's regional UMT, recounts: "In December 2004, Bechir El-Housseini declared he intended to leave his position of Khemisset UMT Regional SG, as he had founded, with foreign support, a developmental association linked to trade unionism. […] We held the Regional Congress and elected a Regional EC with Ahmed El-Haij as SG. I was given the position of vice-SG. We submitted the legal documentation to the authorities and started to work normally. However, we were surprised by the fact that Mahjoub Ben Seddik, after being visited [by Bechir El-Housseini] decided not to recognise the new Regional EC. Mahjoub Ben Seddik sent his aide Miloudi Moukharik to ask Khemisset's governor to cancel our clearance, but the governor answered this was impossible because we had already received the legal authorisation. […] I still remember very well 19 April 2005, it was an unforgettable and dark day. The NEC informed us it was coming to Khemisset to open a debate on the crisis of the regional union. Indeed, at 8 AM, the NEC members were all present, with the exception of Mahjoub Ben Seddik and M'hmed Ghayour. All the SGs of the national unions were also at the building of the regional union, accompanied by the members of the regional committees, including Meknes, Sidi Slimane, Kenitra, and Casablanca. Finally, there

was a procession of ten vehicles full of more than a hundred *baltajis* [thugs], as they are called nowadays. Later, we would find out that the NEC had lied to most of them, telling them that "Amaoui's union", i.e. the CDT, was going to attack our union". El-Masyh adds: "We wanted to open a discussion about this arrival and about problems of internal democracy, but Miloudi Moukharik – the current UMT SG – took us to a corner of the old union building and told us frankly: 'We won't recognise you'. One of our comrades, agricultural engineer Awhada, tried to argue with them, so he was violently beaten. They held a symbolic general assembly, appointed Bechir El-Housseini as Regional SG, and left". […]

"Expensive" energy

[…]

The Redal's[391] workers, clerks, and cadres that met with *Al-Massae* said that the workplace union is characterised by endless violations, because of the union's "collusion" with management. This posed a threat to several rights and past achievements and resulted in mass layoffs, while the workplace union remained shamefully silent. Workers and cadres were fired, the problems of subcontracted clerks, poor working conditions, and the lack of transparency in yearly evaluations remained unresolved, and the quality of firm-level welfare declined. Concerning firm-level welfare, the "reform movement" within Redal's union criticises the conduct of its SG Rachid El-Meniary: "With the complicity of the administration, he fabricated a management board for the firm's *Comité d'Oeuvres Sociales* (COS), depriving the workers of their right to run as candidates and without consulting anyone. All former members of the COS board were excluded because of their disagreement with the SG over the undemocratic and arbitrary methods used to decide the board's composition".

The "reform movement" not only accuses SG Rachid El-Meniary of complicity with management, it also considers him "illegitimate", because he "has not been elected by a general workers' assembly since 1997, and this is forbidden by the new internal regulation and by the resolutions of the last UMT Congress".

The "reform movement" was not alone in criticising SG Rachid El-Meniary. A report by the Supreme Court of Auditors and another by a foreign NGO confirmed

[391] Redal is the subsidiary company of the French corporation Veolia, which manages electricity and water distribution in Rabat.

that he committed violations to obtain personal gains. […] According to the report by *France Libertés*, SG Rachid El-Meniary "works in a consultancy firm linked to Redal. As UMT SG, El-Meniary receives a union secondment from Redal. El-Meniary also benefits from an accommodation paid for by the company, which he demanded from Redal's management on 13 May 2003. This accommodation is a villa located in Temara's neighbourhood Vieux Marocain, and the value of its rent is estimated at about 45,000 dirhams per month, while its total value is 23 million dirhams". The report adds that El-Meniary benefits from a range of privileges, including the coverage of the expenditures for maintenance, security, cleaning, and gardening. For these expenditures, El-Meniary asked Redal's management for 400,000 dirhams in 2004 and 800,000 dirhams in 2010. The report also says that El-Meniary, as an assistant cadre in the firm, does not qualify to benefit from accommodation paid for by the company. […]

Ksar El-Kebir's Autonomous Agency for the Distribution of Water and Electricity has also witnessed numerous abuses and violations involving UMT officials. […]

The liberation of Rabat

"The liberation of Rabat" is the phrase used by the youths of the *Jeunesse Ouvrière*[392] affiliated to *Ennahj Eddimouqrati*. […] Abdellah Lafnatsa, a member of the Rabat EC and the UMT's Administrative Commission, appeared ready to speak about "the blockage of the 12th Congress of the Rabat regional union". Lafnatsa said that "some well-known corrupt union officials, a minority, refused to accept the results of the 11th Congress, boycotted the activities and the struggles of the union for six years, and disappeared until now, despite the fact that this period was full of working-class struggles against arbitrary closures and in defence of trade union rights, which were the object of a real war by the bosses and the *Makhzen* regime". Lafnatsa continued: "We tried to hold the 12th Regional Congress […but s]uddenly some corrupt trade unionists appeared and, unfortunately, succeeded in blocking the Congress activities and prevented its timely conclusion. Because they are isolated and ostracised by most workers in the region, they are trying to make a real 'coup' against the legal decision-making bodies, claiming they have the UMT NEC's support". Will the UMT regional

[392] The *Jeunesse Ouvrière* is the UMT's youth wing.

union be able to hold its Congress and "liberate Rabat", as the brave youths of the *Jeunesse Ouvrière* put it?

23 February 2012, Soulaiman Rassouni, *Al-Massae*, pp. 20-1

2. Statement by the UMT's Expelled Leaders[393]

The UMT in Danger: Unprecedented Attack against the UMT's Democratic Militants
Since 5 March 2012, the UMT, i.e. the most important and oldest trade union confederation in Morocco (founded on 20 March 1955), has been undergoing a severe crisis following the unprecedented offensive by the corrupt and tyrannical bureaucrats that are well represented in the national bodies (the Administrative Commission and the NEC) against a number of democratic militants and officials, who are constantly at the service of the workers and are known for their combativity, their progressive commitment, and their moral integrity. We are living through a real witch-hunt, aimed at the eradication of the symbols of the union's democratic current and the dismantling of the union structures – sectorial federations and local unions – known for their militant dynamism and their internal democracy.

The main manifestations of this bureaucratic attack can be summarised as follows.

On 5 March 2012, an ordinary meeting of the UMT's Administrative Commission (AC) was manipulated by the current that dominates the NEC and transformed into an inquisitional tribunal against the democratic current and its symbols. The pretext was an article that appeared on 23 February 2012 in the Arabic-language daily newspaper *Al-Massae*, which raised – backed by evidence – different aspects of the corrupt and bureaucratic behaviours of some UMT officials. Rather than making the necessary clarifications on the content of the article and, if appropriate, suing the author, these officials started accusing the democratic current members of being behind the article. They thus demanded the expulsion from the union of the officials belonging to the democratic current and the dissolution of the decision-making structures of the *Union Régionale de Rabat-Salé-Témara*, considered to be

[393] The statement was translated from French by the author.

subversive, supportive of the M20Fev, and under the influence of the party *Ennahj Eddimouqrati* (how horrible!).

The AC meeting ended with some stunning decisions, published a few days later in a widely diffused, so-called "organisational resolution", the essential content of which can be summarised as follows:

I. Launch of the exclusion process of two officials of the Rabat regional union. One is a member of the UMT AC while the other is SG of the *Syndicat National des Fonctionnaires du Ministère des Finances*.

II. Dissolution of the decision-making bodies of the *Union Régionale de Rabat-Salé-Témara*, democratically elected by the 11th Congress of the regional union. In particular, the Regional EC was substituted right away with a "management committee" (having no legal existence in the internal statute). Some members of this committee were not even aware of their "membership" within such prefabricated structure. The "management committee" was declared to the Rabat local authorities (as a replacement for the legal Regional EC) who, complicit in this infamy, recognised it.

III. The "organisational resolution" also declared that the "management committee" was in charge of preparing the 12th Congress of the *Union Régionale de Rabat-Salé-Témara*, thus replacing the legal preparatory committee created one year before by the Regional AC.

Let us point out that the 12th Congress of the *Union Régionale de Rabat-Salé-Témara* was initially scheduled for 25 September 2011, then postponed to 30 October (when the opening session was held, but it went no further), then 13 November, then before the end of 2011, and finally 11 March 2012. The "coup" was kick-started on 5 March to prevent the Congress and the re-election of a democratic leadership that the existing balance of power would have produced.

To elegantly conclude this "coup" against legality – kick-started by the "organisational resolution" – the UMT leadership, through sheer violence, closed the Rabat union building (Avenue Jean Jaurès) with the pretext of some refurbishment works. […]

The closure of union buildings or the banning of militants are not new phenomena. […] We are informed that the bans on access to union buildings for

democratic trade unionists are spreading. The closure of the UMT buildings for the trade unionists is a severe violation of trade union rights on the part of the union leadership. It deprives of all credibility its demand that the state and the employers respect labour rights.

An irresponsible, cowardly, illegal, and illegitimate decision, taken on 22 March 2012, expelled three NEC members and one AC member through a "discipline committee" controlled from above and probably inexistent – as its members and its president are unknown, and we do not know when, where, and if it actually convened. In any case, a "discipline committee" cannot decide on such a measure, which falls within the AC's domain. Moreover, the internal statute delegates the determination of the powers of the "disciplinary council" to the internal regulation, which does not exist yet! […]

The "union secondments" are manipulated, and distributed either to submissive trade unionists or on the bases of nepotism (to people that have no relation, except for family ties, to union activism). At the same time, the secondments are withdrawn from the democratic trade unionists, who refuse to bow down.

The 10th FNE Congress was illegally postponed twice in a row, while its date had been legally fixed by the National Council for October 2011. Let us point out that the 9th and last Congress was held more than seventeen years ago, on 11-12 March 1995! […] At the moment, and with the NEC's complicity, there are two separate tendencies: the bureaucratic tendency, which represents a minority but has access to the resources of the confederation and the NEC's support; and the democratic tendency, which has a large majority but is hindered by the dominant tendency of the UMT leadership and cannot even meet in the union buildings. The leader and symbol of this tendency, Abderrazak Drissi, is one of the three NEC members expelled from the UMT! The two tendencies will hold the 10th Congress separately on 5-6 May 2012. Unless the UMT NEC suddenly changes its conduct and abides by the rules, there will be two FNEs within the UMT!

A secessionist conspiracy is trying to weaken the UMT-USF, the organisation that comprises all the federations and national unions of the civil servants from the various ministries and local administrations. […]

Another "coup" was organised against the UMT-FNOFCL, a stronghold of democratic, progressive, and combative trade unionism within the UMT. […]

Some "coup" attempts were also directed against the UMT-FNSA – another flagship of democratic and progressive trade unionism in the UMT – to weaken this great federation. They failed until now, but we must expect the unexpected as we know these sequential "coups" could not be organised without the consent of the *Makhzen* regime, which has never liked democratic, progressive, and combative trade unionism, especially when it has a mass following. […]

The political struggles within the confederation [the UMT] were at first centred on the position towards the M20Fev: should the union provide the M20Fev with material and human, real and sincere, political support or should it restrain itself to theoretical support through public statements, without practical, material, and human support? It was the second option that prevailed.

The political struggle intensified when it became necessary to take sides *vis-à-vis* the constitutional draft presented at the 1 July 2011 referendum. While the dominant current within the leadership defended the draft, and pushed to call for a Yes vote, the democratic current defended the position that the NEC should leave freedom of choice to the members. […]

The influential and tyrannical elements of the UMT leadership thus started to plan a "coup" against the results of the 10th UMT Congress, regarding both the posts of leadership and the organisational reforms. *Al-Massae*'s article of 23 February 2012 provided the excuse to carry out an authoritarian "coup" against the democrats. […]

-We will firmly confront, together with all democrats, the putschist plot aimed at cancelling the results of the 10th UMT Congress and going back to the bureaucratic and dictatorial management that characterised, for 55 years, Mahjoub's reign over the organisation.

-We will face, with all militants of integrity, despotism and corruption within our confederation (starting with recovering the union's stolen assets), exactly as we struggled, in the broader society, within the M20Fev to build a Morocco of dignity, freedom, equality, social justice, democracy, and human rights.

-We continue to reject the "organisational resolution", taken by the AC in its 5 March meeting, and its unfortunate consequences, especially the dissolution of the EC and the other bodies of the Rabat regional union.

-We will work without respite towards the official cancelling of the odious expulsions that hit us and to fully recover our responsibilities as established by the last Congress.

-We will continue carrying our responsibilities as NEC members. […]

-We call upon all democratic trade unionists in the UMT to unify their efforts and engage with determination in the battle against bureaucracy and corruption, until the victory of democracy and moral integrity in the organisation is achieved.

-We call upon all militants who are disillusioned and scandalised by the tyranny of the corrupt and authoritarian bureaucracy to stand firm in their positions within the UMT, to cling to their belonging to the UMT, and to their continuous struggle for internal democracy and the working class.

-We call upon all democratic trade unionists from the different militant confederations to join the struggle against bureaucracy and corruption and to coordinate their efforts to impose the militant unity that is indispensable to realising our common demands, from the perspective of the organisational unity of labour to which the working class aspires.

-We call upon all democratic forces of the country to give importance to the democratisation of the unions and of the mass organisations in general, because it is impossible to democratise Morocco without first democratising the mass organisations and the political parties that work for democratic change.

-We call upon the democratic trade unions abroad, who are friends of the real UMT and of Moroccan workers, to vigorously support the struggle for trade union democracy and against bureaucracy and corruption within the unions. We ask them to make their relations with the leaderships of the UMT and of the other unions conditional upon progress in internal democratisation and good governance.

-Finally, we warn the corrupt bureaucracy backed by the *Makhzen* authorities in this aggressive escalation against the democratic militants: it will surely be the first to lose from the legitimate rage and the coming working-class insurrection against its retrograde practices that have nothing to do with the Spring we are living through in the Maghreb and in the Arab world following the Tunisian Revolution. We also warn the state and the employers to remain neutral in the UMT's internal conflict and to stop their interventions in support of the bureaucratic and corrupt tendency at the expense of the democratic and anti-corruption tendency.

19 April 2012, Abdelhamid Amin, Abderrazak Drissi, Khadija Ghamiri

3. Statement by the RSDM on the UGTT[394]

Trade Union Platform: For a Democratic, Independent, and Militant UGTT

Day by day, the economic crisis of the global capitalist system is getting deeper, wider, and filthier, and its devastating results are threatening all countries of the world. […] To address its crisis and defend its rates of profit, capitalism can only rely on the intensification of the rates of exploitation, the plundering of people's wealth and the escalation of war, sectarianism, repression, abuse, and the offensive against the relative gains that have been achieved through a long and arduous path of struggles and sacrifices. […]

Today, under the dominance of a bureaucratic leadership and with the decline, weakening, and fragmentation of the militant movement, the UGTT is ignoring the material and social losses incurred by the workers, as well as the threats caused by the new reform projects. All this despite the growth of unemployment, mass layoffs, closures of enterprises, the propagation of poverty on a large scale, the deterioration of purchasing power, the poor quality of health services, education, and all other public services. The leadership is also endorsing the general economic, social, and political choices of the regime, on the pretext of containing the negative effects of globalisation. In order to support these policies, the leadership maintains the same old forms of organisation and control – the same methods and regulations, the same activities and tasks – thus making the UGTT merely a huge machine that works with obsolete administrative and hierarchical means, lacking the dynamism of the masses. This explains to a large extent the UGTT's general reluctance to engage in the struggle and to fulfil its trade union responsibilities; it may also explain its limited representativeness among the workers, particularly in the private sector (no more than 10% in the best-case scenario).

The characteristics and effects of the tribal-bureaucratic leadership's dominance on the union can be summarised as follows:

[394] The statement was translated from Arabic by Marwa Talhaoui, Inel Tarfa, and the author.

1-Regarding the UGTT's independence:

-The UGTT endorses the regime's policy framework and the union's decisions must be in line with it.

-The UGTT abandoned the defence of public and individual freedoms.

-The UGTT is negligent in defending trade union freedoms.

-The relations between the UGTT, on the one hand, and civil society groups and the democratic public opinion, on the other, have deteriorated.

2-Regarding the militancy of the organisation:

-Vital trade union, social, economic, and political issues (taxes, employment, education, health insurance, retirement, trade union rights...) are managed through a strategy of appeasement, gradual withdrawal, and double speak (a discourse of loyalty towards the regime and a bogus mobilisational discourse towards the trade unionists).

-The leadership abandoned all [militant] decisions and watchwords, such as:

•The elimination of labour outsourcing;

•The indexing of wages to prices;

•The opposition to SOE privatisations;

•The creation of workplace unions in all firms and the expansion of the UGTT's membership;

•The creation of a trade union solidarity fund;

•Turnover in union responsibilities and the presence of women in all union structures, etc.

-The leadership insists in following a sterile collective bargaining system, which lacks a militant framework, is under the control of the regime and its institutions, and thus contributes to the deterioration of purchasing power and lays the foundations for a collaborationist trade unionism and social peace at the workers' expense.

-The leadership is complicit, through its conspicuous silence, with the price hikes.

-The leadership neglects the private sector and lacks seriousness in the defence of trade union rights and in the protection of the victims of anti-union abuses and layoffs.

3-Regarding internal democracy:

-The right to internal difference was confiscated and freedom of speech within the organisation restricted.

-There was a series of paranoid reactions and reprisals since the 2002 Djerba Congress (campaigns of suspensions of trade unionists from different sectors and regions, failed "coup attempts" against a number of trade union officials in different sectors and regions by fabricating false documents with the aim of settling accounts on trade union divergences and conflicts...).

-The two most important resolutions of the 2002 Djerba Congress were circumvented: the two-hour general strike in support of the Palestinian resistance, and the disputes on Article 10 of the internal regulation (which limits the bearing of union responsibilities in the NEC to two mandates) followed by the attempted "coup" [to change Article 10] during the 2006 Monastir Congress. There is also the persistence in adopting a centralised and improvised negotiating policy that resulted in internal union divisions and revealed an authoritarian tendency that disregards the role of the rank-and-file and sectorial structures, in the absence of clear strategic plans and militant programmes to defend the legitimate demands of the workers.

Today the UGTT is going through a phase of severe convulsion that threatens its unity and credibility, revealing the exacerbation of dangerous symptoms and behaviours that represent a real obstacle to its work and diminish its credibility, such as:

1-The adoption of double speak as a way of dealing with trade unionists and other parties, which originates from an opportunistic mentality that hinders the natural evolution of the organisation and weakens internal dialogue, making it lose all credibility and encouraging the growth of suspicion, distrust, and lack of confidence among the trade unionists.

2-The lack of respect for the periodicity of the meetings of decision-making bodies such as the National Council (twice per NEC mandate), the National Administrative Commission (once every three months), and some sectorial and regional structures, in order to avoid accountability and continue complying with a system that sanctifies and deepens the bureaucratic approach.

3-The attempts to circumvent the decisions of a number of structures, such as the decision not to enter the Chamber of Advisors and the restructuring of the UGTT…

4-The decline of democracy within the organisation through the promulgation of restrictive internal regulations that limit the democratic and militant nature of union activism; the manipulation of representation during Congresses; the robbery of power from the workplace and sectorial structures; the spread of a mentality of conspiracy and treachery; the reliance on exclusion as a method, on flattery and favouritism as a standard behaviour, and on all forms of personal, regional, and tribal loyalties, in addition to the use of financial and professional resources to buy people's dignity and diffuse a culture of greed and corruption.

5-The harnessing of the *Esh'aab* newspaper and of all trade union media platforms for the promotion of the union leadership's views and positions, to impose them on the trade unionists and on public opinion.

6-The use of the Financial Control Commission and the Internal Regulation Commission to settle accounts with democratically elected trade union opponents, each time the leadership fails to get rid of them through the ballot box.

7-The persistence of non-transparent financial practices despite the slogans adopted and the formal mechanisms in place, in the absence of any real inspection independent from the administrative and bureaucratic influence. Such an inspection should deliver the required transparency, safeguard the UGTT's financial resources, and provide the means necessary for the activity of all trade union structures.

8-The circumvention of all forms of rank-and-file expression, particularly public meetings, rallies, sit-ins, etc.

9-The marginalisation of the role and status of working-class youths and women in the promotion of union activism.

10-Dealing with the mining basin struggles in a devious fashion, and the submission of the union's independence and militancy to negotiations and calculations that are external to trade unionism.

11-The passive, and sometimes complicit, position regarding the layoffs of trade unionists in different enterprises and regions.

In this context, we must recall the campaign of internal purges – from the suspensions of trade unionists in different sectors and regions, including Tunis, Gafsa, Kasserine, Bizerte, Beja, Sfax, Zaghouan, etc., to the unmotivated revocations of

union secondments, culminating with the fabrication of false cases against a number of sectorial and regional structures (Bizerte, Nabeul, Tunis, etc.) – with which the bureaucracy aimed at tightening its grip on the organisation and at withdrawing the partial democratic achievements conquered by the trade unionists. Such democratic achievements under threat include the principle of turnover in union responsibilities and the limitation of permanence in the NEC to two mandates, as stated in Article 10 of the UGTT's internal regulation.

Based on our commitment to militant principles and foundations, and on our loyalty to the historical legacy and the sacrifices of the pioneers, the leaders, and the militants, we, the undersigned trade unionists, affirm our tenacity in clinging to an independent, militant, and democratic UGTT, aligned to the causes of the working class, the people, the nation, and the universal causes of a just humanity, for democracy, national liberation, and social emancipation. […]

7 September 2010, *Rencontre Syndicale Démocratique Militante*

4. Article on UGTT SG Jerad's Meeting with Ben Ali[395]

Repudiation of All Forms of Violence and Continuation of the National Effort for Development and Employment

President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali received, on Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Abdessalem Jerad, UGTT SG, who, at the end of the meeting, made the following declaration: "I have had the honour of meeting the Head of State and it was the occasion of a very important discussion, in which we tackled the painful situation of some regions of the country and some ideas and proposals by the UGTT. I have found that the President of the Republic has a deep vision of the main problems and of their causes, and he is willing to solve them".

After having affirmed the satisfaction of the workers' organisation concerning the Head of State's decision to liberate the people who were arrested, Mr. Jerad added: "The UGTT is sorry for the victims but in the same way it rejects all forms of violence and all attacks on the public and private assets and on the achievements of the country. I have shared with the President of the Republic our support for the creation of an

[395] The article was translated from French by the author.

investigative committee on the violations and of another committee to examine corruption cases and the mistakes made by some officials".

The UGTT SG, on the union's behalf, reasserted the imperative of overcoming this difficult and delicate situation, in order to return to normality, and to allow all parties to engage in the application of the measures decided by the Head of State, particularly those concerning employment and the situation of the unemployed and of those who have lost their job, and this will be done through appropriate mechanisms that will be examined.

Mr. Jerad concluded as follows: "I have found that the Head of State has a high consideration of the workers and of their organisation, and he pays much attention to this category as well as to all persons in need".

The Head of State declared he will give instructions to invite UGTT representatives to the regional and local councils and to contribute to the national effort for development and employment.

14 January 2011, *La presse de Tunisie*, p. 4